

Christ the King

Proper 29

Year C

RCL

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Psalm 46

Colossians 1:11-20

Luke 23:33-43

+ Your rule springs into existence as our arms reach out to embrace all creation. From this divine union, let us birth new images for a new world of peace. Amen.

A post popped up in my Instagram feed the other day. The post said: In 2016, it's just been reported that there is one extra minute this year to be added to our clocks. The caption below the post said, "Haven't we suffered enough?" For the church year, we don't have to worry about that, as today is the last day of the church year. The last day we hear readings from year C, and next week we begin Advent, the new church year and year A in our lectionary cycle. As a capstone to the church year, we always celebrate Christ the King Sunday or Reign of Christ Sunday if the kingship language doesn't quite sit well with you. Regardless of the name, the celebration of this day can lend us a quiet moment of introspection as we look into the

past and the future, and remember that Jesus, as alpha and omega, reigns in our hearts, minds, wills, and bodies above all else in the world.

It's been quite a year. We've completed one of the nastiest election cycles many of us can remember. Our country finds itself in division and disunity. We look back further and remember those that were killed in horrific mass shootings and terror attacks. Our earth has seen her share of extreme weather and natural disasters- flooding, sink holes, earthquakes. And our civility and kindness towards one another on the internet, and in real life has seemingly crashed. Some people wonder- is this one of our worst years ever? Composer Joseph Wilson, an inmate at Sing Sing prison, was asked about chaos by an opera singer for her new album. When asked in the midst of chaos, where do you find peace? He answered, that he looks to the book of Genesis where God said, "let there be light." And he says of this, "One would then have to reason that God himself was dwelling in the darkness." ¹

¹ <http://www.npr.org/sections/deceptivecadence/2016/11/04/500515350/joyce-didonato-on-why-art-matters-in-the-midst-of-chaos>

And God became human through the person of Jesus, and dwelt among us. In the brokenness, in the muck, in the chaos, and Jesus ruled through a different reign than expected. Through service and humility. As the prayer goes from Morning Prayer, Jesus stretched out his arms of love on the hard wood of the cross so that all might come within his saving embrace. And that's where we find Jesus today in our Gospel, in a reading that we more often see in Holy Week. Those final moments on the cross—the pinnacle in the gospel for all of Jesus' life among us.

In Luke, we find Jesus as King in a lot of places where kings "shouldn't be". We find him with tax collectors, with sinners, with those who are ill and sick. We find him with the oppressed, the isolated from society, the unheard and the unloved and the invaluable. We find Jesus on the cross welcoming criminals and extending forgiveness. And, we find Jesus in the midst of Death itself, in the darkness, the emptiness, of the tomb. It's a reign of power that is extremely counter cultural and self-sacrificing. An idea of power that on the surface, appears that the world won and God lost.

So if this is the image of the kingdom of God, under Christ Jesus, where does that leave us who serve this God? As we focus on what's ahead, we might find ourselves wondering- what's next in this great realm of the unknown? Simply put and most complexly, our purpose is to make room for the love of Jesus Christ to work in our midst. There's a very wise saying: "the Spirit works best when we get out of the way."

It doesn't mean we ignore the past or block any feelings we might be having about the state of our nation and world. But we can hold the past ever so gently, naming how events and experiences affect us deeply. And we can look ahead with hope, even in the midst of great unknowns, because Jesus has been to the tomb, and back. Conquered death and darkness, and brought about great transformation with his life and in his resurrection. Holding on to hope doesn't mean we are naive to the realities of this present age. Jesus most certainly wasn't.

Because in Jesus' kingdom, a hallmark of who he was, was that he was a person of deep prayer. And we know Jesus spent time in prayer and conversation with God regularly. It was in that foundation he did his

kingdom work. In the last few weeks of conversation with one another, a number of us had to steal away from the world for a bit. Take a break from the media, facebook, the overwhelming 24 hour news cycle. But from that time apart, set aside, we return to reengage with the world, just as Jesus did.

There is good in the world, and plenty of good has happened this year. Communities coming together to support one another. Peace rallies. Neighbors reaching out to help neighbors. Those speaking out against injustices and standing up for the voiceless and powerless. The hungry being fed, the homeless being housed. And there is good news on the cross because of what happens next. The criminal asks Jesus to remember him. Remember me when you come into your kingdom, he says. And Jesus replies without skipping a beat, today you will be with me in paradise. We don't need to have any doubts. In the Reign of Christ, Jesus knows us, knows our hearts and souls, and does remember us. And, Jesus remembers all those who aren't "us", who we might differentiate between us and them,

who are the forgotten, the unlovable, invaluable, and the unheard. Here and now.

Because the internet isn't always truthful, we're not gaining an extra minute this year. But we will have what's called a "leap second". The extra second will be added on Dec. 31 at 23 hours, 59 minutes and 59 seconds. Its true purpose is that it's added to keep our electronic world in sync. The earth's rotation doesn't always move at a steady or predictable pace. Sometimes, it only takes a second to get back in sync. Sometimes, it feels like a very long second, but in God's timing, in the Reign of Christ, the striving for justice, the dignity of every human being, and and unity never ends.