

## **“The Kingdom of God”**

Christ the King Sunday. What images come to your mind with the word King?...

I imagine many of us think of earthly kings: William the Conqueror, who obviously conquered others, King Richard the Lion Hearted – bold and powerful king, King Louis the XIV, nice furniture named after him, Henry the VIII, and his paramours, Alexander, who cried when he had no kingdoms left to conquer, ... Earthly kings with earthly powers to enforce their will upon those they ruled. Sovereigns, potentates, rulers, set above those they ruled, and those they ruled must have served them.

Then there is Burger King – big burgers... the king of burgers, bigger is better... but I digress.

So how do those images compare with Jesus? I find it difficult to reconcile those images. Jesus does not seem to lord it over anyone, in fact, he is the model of the servant king. Jesus serves his subjects, loving and caring for them.

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I was impressed last week with Scott’s image of the end times, the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming with the images of peace and harmony rather than the more typical violent, warlike endings we frequently associate with the end times. I like it.

The same is true this week with Christ the King, a King not over power over people, but power to enable and care for people.

Gee, I could end right here, pretty good sermon. But then I’m a preacher and just can’t stop that quickly.

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Jesus the King, loved to teach people with his parables; life stories that enabled folk to see what Jesus wanted them to see. And what was the subject of these parables and stories? Most of the stories taught about one subject – the kingdom of God the Kingdom of the kingdom of Heaven.

He tells folk then and now that we must be like children to enter the kingdom of heaven – simple acceptance of that greater reality.

Jesus told us it would be difficult for rich folk to enter the Kingdom of heaven. They are too distracted by earthly stuff, materials, fleshly things, to see the eternal, heavenly things.

Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a mustard seed. It is a teeny tiny seed that makes a really big plant. Something easy to overlook but makes a big statement.

Jesus talks about the kingdom of heaven being like a huge fishnet that gathers in fish, keeping the good one as tossing out the bad ones.

Jesus talks about the kingdom of heaven in terms of the 10 virgins who were to keep their lamps lit for the bridegroom, to be prepared for what is to come in the great future, and not just sleep away when things don’t happen according to our own timetables.

Jesus talks about the kingdom of heaven being like a man sowing good seed in his field but nasty folk sowing weeds, leading us to understand big visions of heaven versus a weedy world in which we live now.

Jesus talks about the kingdom of heaven and laborers in a vineyard. The laborers cry and complain about the injustices of who gets what for various work forgetting that the owner can do what he wants, and what they receive are gifts from him, not something they have earned.

Jesus talks about the kingdom of heaven in terms of a pearl so wonderful one sells everything else in order to buy the greater prize. This is a story that asks us to keep our heavenly vision alive and being far more important than earthly treasures.

And the list goes on and on. The kingdom of heaven often stands in sharp contrast to earthly kingdoms. The kingdom of heaven is about our relationship with God and each other and the importance of loving each other. Earthly kingdoms are often based on competing to see who gets the biggest portion of the pie at the expense of others.

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Many of you have heard me talk about this earth being a training place where we are to learn about how to be good citizens of the kingdom of heaven. We are here to learn about the teachings Jesus shares with us about heavenly, eternal values over earthly temporary things.

That was the vision Scott shared with us about the end times when we put those heavenly values to work on this earth. A time of peace and harmony between humans and those things we humans are responsible for. A time when we all embrace to role of servant leader that Jesus taught about and demonstrated in his earthly life.

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So what is heaven like? What will it be in that kingdom where Jesus tells Pilate he will rule?

I don't know. For me, the idea of a place where humans are devoid of ego, self-centeredness, is next to impossible to envision. I know it will be much different than this world but I really can't wrap my head around how it will be. It is just too much for me to see from this earthly side.

But Jesus gives us hints in the stories and parables he tells us.

We need to read those stories over and over again to help us gain a vision that heavenly rather than earthly.

We need to grasp those greater realities, eternal values that last forever, over the temporal, fleshly values of daily materialistic living.

We need to learn those teachings over and over again and seek to implement them in our lives here as training to be good citizens in the Kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is where Jesus is king, a servant-king loving us and enabling us to love others.

Let it be.