

Christ the King A RCL  
 Trinity, Bend  
 Ezekiel 34:11—16, 20—24  
 Ps. 95:1—7  
 Ephesians 1:15 – 23  
 Matthew 25: 31—46

Today is Christ the King Sunday. Those of us living in the US, don't have a king or queen. But there are people and groups who use the term.

Prince Charles, son of Queen Elizabeth, will be the King of England someday! It's fine for the British to hail Charles as their future king, but here in America, our experience doesn't include kings – at least not of the political sort.

“The King.” Say that to Americans, and who doesn't think of Elvis, the King of Rock 'n' Roll? Or what about Michael Jackson, crowned the King of Pop? The Los Angeles Kings in hockey, the Sacramento Kings in basketball, king snakes, kingfishers, king crab, chicken a la king, the kids' game “king of the mountain”, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King.

I visited a country once that had a king they liked. In fact, Swaziland is a true monarchy. This tiny country is surrounded on 3 sides by South Africa and Mozambique on the fourth side.

The thing that is different there, is the King is the youngest son of the previous king and he rules with his mother. His mother has a big role because she is there to balance his decisions. She is the on the job trainer in a way.

By tradition, the king reigns along with his mother, her title translates as *She-Elephant*. Which is a good title because elephants live in family groups with the females taking care of all the young ones.

The mother of the king becomes the administrative head of state and as a **spiritual** and national head of state, with real power counterbalancing that of the king.

Their kingdom is so strong that their government works this way. The king appoints the prime minister from the elected legislature, and then the king and his mother can also appoint a minority of legislators to both chambers of parliament with help from an advisory council.

The king is allowed by the constitution to appoint some members to parliament for special interests. These special interests are citizens who might have been left out by the electorate during the course of elections nor did not enter as candidates.

This is done to balance views in parliament. Special interests could be people of the female gender, tribal differences, disability, the business community, civic society, scholars, chiefs and so on.

But we don't have that. We have the kingdom of God. We pray every Sunday in the Lord's Prayer. "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name, **Your kingdom come**, your will be done on earth as in heaven."

Just what does that mean? I would like to suggest that Matthew spells it out rather clearly, when he has Jesus say,  
 "I was hungry and you fed me,  
 I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,  
 I was homeless and you gave me a room,  
 I was shivering and you gave me clothes,  
 I was sick and you stopped to visit,  
 I was in prison and you came to me."

Then the key question was asked, "When I don't remember such a thing?" To which the king replies, "I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me."

There is a wonderful passage in the book *Small Great Things* by Jodi Picoult. This book is the story of a black labor and delivery nurse. In this passage she has been told not to touch the newborn child of extremely racist parents. As she looks down at the newborn boy in the nursery she thinks.

"Babies are such blank slates. They don't come into this world with the assumptions their parents have made, or promises their church will give, or the ability to sort people into groups they like and don't like.

They don't come into this world with anything, really, except a need for comfort. And they will take that from anyone, without judging the giver. I wonder how long it takes before the polish given by nature gets worn off by nurture."

Wouldn't it be nice to go back to being a blank slate? But the truth is we can't. We cannot erase our experience nor should we. We need all of those things we have experienced to be who we are.

In his most recent book, *"Love is the Way"*, Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry says find your skill and use it. To illustrate this, he tells the story of Ruth Miller, who was a member of his father's church. She claimed the job of taking care of the vestments of the acolytes. She hemmed them as needed and washed them.

What fascinated him as a little boy of 5 is that she had 2 prosthetic legs. When he was quite a bit older he learned her story.

In the 1940's she lost her legs in a house fire. When she was recuperating in the hospital, she fell into a dark depression and was struggling to understand what future she could have without her legs. She didn't know if she would ever be mobile again.

During this time she was visited by her parish priest. "Father Brown," she pleaded, "if only the Lord will heal me, I'll find a way to serve him."

When she got her prosthetic legs, she was delighted just to be able to stand and walk across the room. Figuring that God had made good on his side of the bargain, she thought seriously about how she would do the same. Mrs. Miller became a seamstress, so she volunteered to take charge of the vestments for not only the acolytes, but the choir kids too.

We have opportunities to do something for others even during this COVID time of social isolation. Today begins Alternative Christmas. Those of you who attended the Adult Forum got to hear about each of the organizations you can support instead of Christmas gifts for those who don't need or want anything. For details how to do this please check the December Trinity Newsletter, the Trumpet.

The organizations include Gifts for the Christ Child, where this parish will take what you give and buy gift cards for food so the Family Access Network can distribute them to those who cannot afford to buy Christmas season food this year. The deadline for this is tomorrow at noon.

The Christmas giving tree, which allows you to buy gifts for those children whose parents can't afford gifts this year. We have lots of people in Bend who are out of work and struggling to make ends meet.

Family Kitchen, which is serving about 6500 take-out meals a month.

Condega, Nicaragua which just suffered their second hurricane in the last 2 weeks.

Cove/COPY, which sends "at risk" kids to camp or finds alternative things to do, for those who cannot go to camp for a week in the summer.

Episcopal Relief and Development, which helps in emergencies, like recovery for those in Oregon, who suffered from floods or forest fires this year.

As The Rev. Dr. Charles Price, better known as Charlie Price to his friends, used to say, “When the Spirit of God in me touches the Spirit of God in you, that is a holy moment caused by the Spirit of God. It can happen multiple times a day; we just need to be aware of it.

It is seen in how we live and how we treat and be present to those we meet. Sometimes we don’t even know this is happening but find out later or upon reflection that this is what happened. Some of us call those “a ha” moments.”

It’s when you greet someone who is not like you with a smile, (People can tell you are smiling even when you are wearing a mask) and look them in the eye as you wish them well. When you show that all people have dignity even when others miss it.

When we live as peaceful people who listen to one another then come up with a workable compromise we are demonstrating what it means to be members of the kingdom of God.

We follow a king who was crucified and mocked in a public display of fear. One who had King of the Jews nailed to the cross just above His head. One who was mocked and spat upon as people went by, and by Roman soldiers who said, “If you are king of the Jews, save yourself” as they gave him sour wine.

What those folks didn’t know was the Resurrection would take place just 3 days later. Imagine the surprise when the soldiers guarding the tomb realized it was empty and then heard through the grape vine that he was alive.

They experienced the same shock the disciples and the women at the tomb had, awe that comes with something so unbelievable.

This is the King we follow. The King that calls us to live out our belief in Gospel principles. The King that calls us to live in a loving way that includes all people.

If we pray in the Lord’s Prayer “**your kingdom come.**” We have to make it happen. The kingdom that calls us to live in the world but not of the world. Not always easy but with the help of God it is possible.