

## **Sermon Christ the King Sunday 2010 St. James' Poquetanuck**

Kingship. To be a king. It's kind of hard for us, particularly in America to talk about kings. It's part of our national identity to be free of kings and rulers. And yet today we celebrate the feast of Christ the King. In our first reading we hear from Jeremiah how God will restore a righteous kingdom that shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

In the beautiful Canticle of Zechariah, the image of king is as savior who will forgive sins and guide our feet into the way of peace. And in the epistle we hear of God's power in Christ *"For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things."*

In the gospel we hear a different story about Jesus as king. Rather than one of great power and might over all creation, we see Jesus being crucified between two criminals. His hands are nailed to the cross and he doesn't appear to have much power at all. The world has the power in this passage...at least that's how it seems.

This Sunday marks the end of the church year, which starts again next week with Advent. The last Sunday of each year is called Christ the King when we celebrate Christ's kingship and the belief that no matter what happens here on earth or in heaven, Jesus Christ will rule over all for ever and ever.

And yet, we have this reading of his crucifixion. It seems a bit strange that while we're trying to focus on Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, that the church give us this gospel. Why? What are these

readings trying to tell us about Jesus, about being a king and about ourselves?

We often talk about the kingdom of God in the bible. We hear about God's kingdom in songs and in prayers. To the writers of scripture they had a very specific understanding of what they were trying to convey when they talked about God's kingdom.

When God's kingdom comes—everything will be as it should be—everything in right relationship. As we heard in last week's passage from Isaiah *the lion will lay down with the lamb*. Everything will be in order as it was meant to be from all eternity.

So often we focus our gaze toward the heaven when we talk about kingdom. We wait until the day the Lord calls us home to glory. We wait patiently and suffer the troubles of this life waiting for God's kingdom to come. And this is right to do.

But there's another part to God's message. It's the message that the kingdom, while it is to come, is also here right now in this life, in this world. As we used to say in seminary....**the Kingdom now and not yet**. And this is the message of the passage from the gospel of Jesus' crucifixion.

Our call in this life is to follow God's kingdom right here and right now. We are called to put things right in our lives. We are called to seek the kingdom here first of all. We are called to be in good relationship with ourselves, with one another and with God in the present.

Jesus on the cross reminds us that when we follow God's kingdom now, the world won't like it. God's kingdom is not of this world, but it is IN

this world. And, when we live the good news of the gospel the world will push back at us pretty hard.

The lesson for us is to live the good news, live the way we are called to live, and be willing to pay the price if need be.

So how do we live the kingdom now, how do we put things in order as they should be? For each of us it's different. For some living the kingdom may be actively seeking healing in our own families. It may be lettering go of anger and hurt that someone has done to us and putting that relationship right---and what better time to do that than in this season of Thanksgiving.

Living the kingdom may be changing a destructive behavior. It may be substance abuse that does not build up, but tears us down.

Living the kingdom may be sharing our gifts, and our treasures, and open our hands to one another.

Living the kingdom may mean stopping the judging of others and ourselves---curbing our tongue and trying to change our hearts.

Living the kingdom may be about speaking out against violence in our community, lending a word of kindness, helping a neighbor.

All of this is part of the kingdom right NOW. We are called to be IN this world, but like Jesus on the cross, we are not to be OF this world.

May we heed Jesus' call to kingship—to put things right in our own lives—to live the kingdom right here and right now—not only to look to the clouds for the kingdom to come. The kingdom is here and now and also to come....**here and not yet.** We shall all one day be part of that kingdom in the hereafter, but in the meantime our job in this life is to do

whatever we can with what God has given us, to make HIS kingdom  
come alive IN this world NOW. Amen.