

The Last Sunday after Pentecost
The Feast of Christ the King
November 22, 2015
Proper 29, Year B, RCL

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2 Samuel 23:1-7
Revelation 1:4b-8
John 18:33-37

Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Somewhere over the rainbow... The idea of a kingdom, realm, or country that is beyond our horizon is a feature of human existence. Whether it is Valhalla of the Norse, Tir na n-Og of the Celts, the Elysian Fields of the Greeks, or heaven of the Jews and Christians, we all have an idea of this other place, this place of light and peace and joy. The place where wounds are healed, the sick made whole, the oppressed given rest, the righteous rewarded. The place where there is no sorrow or weeping but only joy. We all carry images, stories, and dreams of a land beyond the sea, behind the sun, in a parallel universe. God gives us a hunger and a longing for this other place. Many of us have had at one time or another a nagging sense that we don't belong here, that this is not our true home.

That is because this is not our true home. We were made for heaven, for the Kingdom of God, for that place or realm of which Jesus is king. In the Old Testament, the Abraham and his descendents were nomads. The term they used to describe themselves was “sojourner.” A temporary resident, a resident alien. As the old spiritual has it, “I'm just a poor wayfaring stranger.”

So what are we doing here? We are learning how to be citizens of the Kingdom. We are learning how to love. We are learning how to cling to what is true rather than what is a sham. We are practicing generosity, courage, fortitude, and justice. We are developing characters suitable for life in that fair land to which we are bound.

The desire, that instinct to wish for paradise, to wish for the king to come and set all right, is more than just wishful thinking. That the desire is put here inside each of us by God, so that we should never be content with the way things are. Our hearts should be restless until they find that divine rest in God. We are given the desire for the King because the king will in fact come.

Yet the Kingdom of heaven, the Kingdom of Jesus, the fair land toward which we are journeying is not just a destination. It is also a new reality that is coming toward us. Jesus preached of the Kingdom of God that was almost upon us. At the very time that we are traveling toward the Promised Land, the kingdom and its King are coming toward us.

I also believe that to live without the desire for the coming of the king is to live in a very grey and bleak world indeed. It is to live in a world which has no point or purpose. It is to live with survival and immediate pleasure as the only goals. It is to live only for the bottom line and with complete cynicism.

What does the future hold? Perhaps nuclear war will destroy all or most of us. Perhaps our economy will not recover. Perhaps in the next thirty years, the gap between the rich and the poor will have expanded so greatly that there is no longer a middle class, and that only force will keep the poor in their places. Perhaps I better start making sure that my and my children's future is as secure as possible. I better earn as much as I can now and give my kids the best possible education now so that we are as prepared as possible to face an uncertain future. And since there

is not enough to go around, I must compete against every one else. I will be nice as long as I do not jeopardize my position against competition. I will be careful and take no risks. I will hoard and protect. I will look over my shoulder always and never trust a stranger.

I cannot live in such a world. I will not live in such a world. I will live in a world of hope, a world of faith. We long for that kingdom in which the dragon is defeated because it does exist. It is not a mere fairy tale. My Kingdom is not of this world, but is just as real. In fact it is more real than this one.

“We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ . . . he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.” I believe that the king will come and get rid of this dragon of cynicism and calculation. I believe that there is kingdom that will come. I pray every day that the kingdom will come. I will follow that Lord who said that the kingdom was very near. I will bet everything I have that all that wonderful story is true. And I will do it because it is a better way to live.

But I will need help to live that way. For I am frightened too. I need friends who will encourage me on those days when I start to think maybe the whole thing is just a child’s tale. I will need people to love me enough to challenge me when my courage fails. I need friends with whom I can share those signs that the Kingdom is on it way. The prayers that are answered. Those acts of kindness, respect, and service that draw tears to the eye for their beauty. Let us share these experiences.

Let us be clear. Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, who was killed in or about the year 30, and who rose again from the dead according to many witnesses who encountered him after his execution, this Jesus will come again. He will come in power to set all things right. He will come with sufficient power to rule the earth in spite of all its weaponry and wealth. He will

come and vindicate all those men and women who have believed in him through the centuries and kept his memory alive. Because he will come again, our lives now are different. We live in hope. We live in an abundant universe where there is plenty for everyone. We live in world in which generosity and open handedness natural and reciprocated. We live in world in which extravagant abandonment to the good is natural and reasonable.

So when we go to work tomorrow, let us think about this king who is to come. Let us be as upright and honorable, as compassionate and caring, as courageous in confronting evil, as we would want him to see us. In so doing we will already be building the kingdom for which we all pray every day when we say, “Thy Kingdom come, they will be done, on earth . . .”

Jesus says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come lord Jesus! Maranatha.