

“Steps to experience Jesus as King in our Lives”

Sermon Notes by the Rev. Arnold Bush, Priest in Charge, Church of the Epiphany, Tallassee, AL, Christ the King Sunday, November 25, 2012.

Text: Collect: “Mercifully grant that the people of the earth... may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule.” Psalm 93, “The Lord is king... for ever and for evermore.” John 18:36, “Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.”

Purpose: To grasp that we are Children of the King and the steps in making Jesus King (Lord) of our lives.

I Introduction: A procession of children from an Episcopal Sunday school into the Eucharistic congregation on Christ the King Sunday

Go with me into a fairly large Episcopal Church in NC with several children in the Church School. It is Christ the King Sunday; children are gathering in the Parish Hall about to process into the nave and then sit in the chancel area. All of them are dressed up in costumes with paper crowns on their heads. The teachers have talked to them about what this Sunday means and have told them to chant two times, “Make way for a Child of God; make way for a child of God.” Can anyone chant this phrase?

The little procession of young children is dramatizing a very important theological truth! It is dramatizing the point that there is more to life than just Mom and Dad in a child’s life. This affirmation is what happens as a child or adult receives holy baptism. (Two persons were baptized in this Nave this year).

Open your red Prayer Books to page 858 to read the affirmation that happens at baptism.

Note the verbs: God adopts us as his children and makes us members of Christ’s Body, the Church, and we inherit of the kingdom of God.

He is adopting us into the Family of God, and He is making us members of the Body of Christ. We do not have to earn our inheritance; we inherit a place in his heavenly kingdom. Good news brothers and sisters.

This means someone else is supreme in our lives! Someone else loves us even when we are babies without achievement! These babies are not just accidents in the universe! God gives them a new self-image that they are children of God! As a Christian Church in Elmore County, let us make way the child of the King who walks through our red doors.

In a brief look at the scriptures for Christ the King Sunday, we read in Daniel 7:9, “As I watched, thrones were set in place and an Ancient One Took his throne....” Psalm 93:1, “The LORD is king; he had put on splendid apparel...his throne has been established.” Revelation 1, “He has made us to be a kingdom, priest serving his God and Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” John 18:36, “My kingdom is not of this world.... Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”

What is the kingdom of God? Here is a helpful definition: The kingdom of God is where and when the Will of God reigns in the hearts and wills of his followers. When the WILL OF GOD IS

RULING IN OUR HEARTS, THEN THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS A REALITY. Thus, during a moment in chronological time, when a Christian Congregation, a small group of Christians, or an intentional Christian Family is operative within the Will of God, then the kingdom is a reality.

II Here are some suggested steps that tend to
Make Jesus the King of our lives:

1. Understanding our "Self-talk" All of us have inner voices that talk to us, but I can also recall the voices of my Mom and Dad, a priest who has mentored me, and my wife. These are messages or voices of parents, teachers, coaches, and relatives. Some give messages of destructive condemnation; "You just do not measure up." I recall the first F that I received in a foreign language or the first time I was let go from a responsibility. What was my self-talk? "You are a failure." Or, "You had a failure." But, I also heard the message, "You are a child of God, you are forgiven; learn from your mistakes. I am placing my arms around you as you come to take the cup and bread at the communion rail." Obviously, the key is do you have a self-talk that affirms you are a child of the King? You are adopted and an inheritor of the kingdom of God. A motive for having a children's choir or children's church school is to provide an environment where children experience and hear the phrase, "You are a child of the King, and you have been adopted into the Body of Christ." What percent of the children in Central Alabama hear these words?"
2. Examine and be aware of cultural messages that elevate our radical independence. There are resistances in our culture to the fact that all persons are created equal. That statement values rather than devalues human life. I recall studying Charles Colson's book on Radical Individualism. He said, along with many other critics, that radical individualism manifests itself in the following: "This is my life, my schedule, my money in the bank, my lifestyle. Do not tell me what to do. Do not place any demands on me. This is a free country." I recall teaching an adult class on the Common Good of a Society. There are legitimate demands and laws placed up on us such as not polluting a small river, not texting while driving, not driving 70 miles mph up Gilmer Avenue, and not wearing seat belts so my insurance will not have to pay for your post-accident surgery.
3. Use your God-given volition to adopt goals for your life. Certainly our goals need to be aligned to the WILL OF GOD. These goals need to be worthwhile, altruistic, and something that God will bless. One change in family therapy is not just addressing the individual dysfunction or problem but instead, working on the written goals of an individual or family. I have known Episcopalians who have a family mission statement or a set of family values and practices such as, "We will respect the dignity of every human being." Some research from Yale University states that only 5 % of the American people have life-time goals, goals that are posted or placed in a weekly calendar and not on a napkin in a restaurant.
4. The daily seeking of directions in your life for King Jesus. The baptismal vow reads this way: "I will promise to follow and obey him as Lord." This is the most important step in today's sermon. Daily seeking the Will of God, or as the Collect of Christ the King Sunday, "Lord of lords, and King of kings; coming under his most gracious will." Some of the recent Christian literature from Diana Butler Bass, Phyllis Tickle, and Markus Borg seems to be saying that an assumption of many faithful Christians assumes that living the

Christian life is acceding to certain beliefs found in the Apostle's and Nicene Creeds. Do you believe this or that? As an Episcopal Priest, people ask me, "Do you believe the resurrection of Christ is true? Second Coming of Christ, etc.?" Or, many assume the Christian life is primarily conforming to an external ethical system. If you believe in the creeds and practice a moral life, then that is your Christian life style. A proper belief system and high ethical behavior is important, but there seems to be something else? What is it? The contemporary writers are reminding the everyday followers of Jesus that we are to go through the day having a quiet time to seek the will of God. Also, as we move through our daily activities, we are having a spontaneous conversation, one that is seeking. God is gracious; God is loving and willing to give us guidance. Recall the introduction: Jesus as Prophet, Jesus as Priest and Jesus as King. It is from him we receive our guidance. Monday through Monday I have spent some 40 hours reviewing my history, my health, my finances, my spiritual and vocational life. This has been a real benefit, and it's a privilege to take a week out to reflect with thanksgiving and seek the will of God for me in my vocation as a priest in charge of Epiphany.

5. The added benefit is to experience receiving the power in following Jesus daily. Phil. 4:13, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."
Open ourselves to let God be in our goals and plans, spending some quality time with him, and committing ourselves to him.

We can be successful in taking daily steps with him, but remember, the road to success is usually UP HILL.

CONCLUSION: SEEK YE THE KINGDOM OF GOD FIRST.

1. First part of the day
2. First of each week in worship
3. First portion of our income laying aside an income on the first day of the week (Paul in 1 Cor.9)
4. First consideration in making a decision or choice
5. First plan in your life. Remember life is so daily. Marriage, work is so daily. Jesus is our king and friend.