

SERMON 812

Christ the King

Last Sunday after Pentecost

November 27, 2013

921st Week as Priest

747th Week at St Dunstan's

12th Week at Epiphany-Tallassee

FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, which is the Last Sunday after Pentecost and the end of our long, green season. This week is also the end of our church year, and so it is most appropriate that we find our completion in Christ as we began the church year with the First Sunday of Advent and the expectation of Christ.

Beginnings and endings are always a part of the human condition—leaving and returning, waking and sleeping, matriculation and graduation, birth and death—as is the repetition of beginnings and endings. T.S. Eliot wrote in his religious poem, *Little Gidding*:

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.

We tend to see those fullness-of-time moments only for what they appear to be at a particular point in time.

Leaving is understood as the end of a friendship or a sense of belonging; but very often leaving is the beginning of new friendships and new experiences of belonging.

Lying down to sleep at night feels like the end of a long day, but it is really rest and preparation for the beginning of another, new day.

Death appears to many as the end of life, and they fear death as separation, darkness, and utter despair. But we know that it is instead a beginning of new life in Christ, lived in the Kingdom of God, with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven.

Eliot, who was an English poet and member of the Church of England, said of this life:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

It is true. We find ourselves in returning. We come to know our selves in exploring life as an adventure, and in arriving home to see our selves and our lives as if for the first time.

Saint Anselm described this life process as “faith seeking understanding.” Those of us who have taken EFM, or Education for Ministry, know that Anselm’s words describe the life of faith, the way of the cross, of following the path of Jesus of Nazareth.

I must tell you quite plainly that, as far as my own faith, my own understanding, my own life, Jesus of Nazareth is everything. He is what another poet, George Herbert, called “Softnesse, and peace, and joy, and love, and blisse, Exalted Manna, gladnesse of the best.”

Jesus of Nazareth is more than we expected, more than we could ever have imagined. He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He is the Holy One of God, and the Anointed One, the Messiah. He is teacher, rabbi, healer, worker of wonders, and one who raises the dead. He is the Bread of Heaven, the Vine, the Good Shepherd, and the Light of the World. Jesus is the Word of God, and he is our One and Only Holy Hope. Jesus is the Man of Sorrows, and the Man for Others. He is the Son of God, but he is also God the Son.

Saint Paul described Jesus of Nazareth in this way:

though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord.

He is Christ the King. **AMEN.**

697 words