

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA

Christ the King Sunday: November 24, 2024

“Christ the Lord”

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Good morning and welcome to Christ the Lord Church not only on this twenty-seventh Sunday after Pentecost but also the day we celebrate this church, Christ the King, or should I say, Christ the Lord.

So, I would like to begin with a post on Facebook coming from the *Herbs of the Torah* that states, “One lesson that we Christians have not learned in the last two thousand plus years is that Jesus had no political control over the Roman Empire and he still changed the entire world. We keep trying to change the world the way the Roman Empire did, instead of the way Jesus did.”

What was Jesus trying to do? How did the change happen? Why do we, after all this time, sometimes getting it wrong; sometimes getting it right, look to what Jesus would do to help us make our decisions. Why is Jesus our measuring stick? And of course, why would we want Jesus to be King. He died without even owning a grave.

“What have you done?” Pilate asks and Jesus responds, “My kingdom is not from this world.” Jesus moves that question from the outside view of what society saw to the interior. It’s as if Jesus is saying you can’t understand what I’ve done apart from the values I hold. For Jesus, the kingdom represents God’s ultimate values - God’s desires and best hopes for the world, you, and me.

God’s ultimate love for his creation is modeled in Jesus’ acceptance of those on the margins; his healing of those society had left as lost. The ability to call back a life from death, to show that God’s love is with us and has power through both life on earth and that which awaits us after death.

This is a time when our actions and words reveal the values we hold. And those values are expressed in what we do and say. Our outside and our inside are always in relationship, sometimes through alignment and other times through contradiction.

What have you done? Look at what you are doing in your life today. Listen to what you are saying or posting on social media. Consider what you've said and done the past year. What values are being revealed, affirmed, or contradicted? What do they have to do with the gospel; have you brought forth some form of good news to others? Are you who you want to be and living how you want to live? And if it's not, what will you do about it?

Thursday is a day of Thanksgiving. Let us not take that wonderful celebratory day and make it about something other than being thankful, hopeful, compassionate and loving. Let's not make it about the food, football or the millions of things it could be. Take a moment to honor the indigenous people involved in our American history. I believe we face a time in our country when unity and recognizing the God in those we are in front of - is more important than ever before.

Pilate concludes, "So you are a king?" to which Jesus says, "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. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

To make truth a belief is too easy. I can believe the truth of love but am I loving you, my neighbor, my enemy? I can believe the truth of forgiveness but what does that matter if I don't forgive? I can believe the truth of welcoming the stranger and still close my doors and heart to the migrant and refugee. I can believe the truth of a thousand different things and never do a one of them. And if I'm not doing the truth it doesn't much matter what I say I believe.

Jesus testified to the truth by doing the truth; by loving, forgiving, welcoming, healing, feeding. What about you and me? What is the truth in your life today? What truth are we doing? What truth is still waiting to be done by you and me?

Jesus did not overthrow Rome. And most of his contemporaries were very disappointed at this fact. He did not change the system in the Temple; he did not even change his own religion of Judaism. What he did change was peoples' hearts. This is what we mean when we say Christ the Lord, or Christ is King. Not the way Pilate here grills Jesus; not of this world, but through love - Jesus rules our hearts to make us better people despite ourselves.

Jesus never let his identity, action, or truth be determined by where he was or who he was with. Instead, he brought his identity, action, and truth to every place he went, every person he met, and every circumstance he faced. Who he was here is who he was over there. Bringing hope, bringing good news not only in word, but also in action. That's how I want to live, don't you?

Our struggle for authenticity and integrity is the struggle to reclaim ourselves. It's the way of healing and wholeness, and it's always a work in progress. Every place we go, every person we meet, every circumstance we face holds before us questions of our authenticity and integrity.

This Thanksgiving, be yourself, I know you have it in you to be the light in the darkness. Give and receive forgiveness if necessary, accept the truth even when it is difficult so that healing may begin, and strengthen the support around you for a brighter future.

We may not be able to stop the wars going on, but we can donate, inform, and pray. We cannot stop the political shifts that are happening, but we can be loving to our neighbors. We may not be able to feed everyone in the world who is hungry, but we can feed a few. And lastly, we can be grateful for those small things we often take for granted.

Jesus did not change Rome, but he changed hearts. He is always changing mine, and I already see he is changing yours. Happy church anniversary, Christ the Lord! Amen.