

# Christ the Lord Episcopal Church      Pinole, CA

The Feast of Christ the King: November 21, 2021

Giving Christianity a Chance

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Good morning, everyone. Today is CTL's name sake. Christ the King and I have to admit, the title Christ the King I find a bit unnerving. For those who attended our Bible study class which included an in depth look at King Solomon and the lifestyle of a king we of course discovered that with all the power, wealth, and progeny, kingship doesn't guarantee happiness, or a meaningful purpose in life.

Some years ago, Mohandas Gandhi -- the great Hindu religious leader of India who brought about the overthrow of the British empire through active love, not violence -- said about Christianity: "Christianity has not failed. It's never been tried," and I think, as we celebrate this Feast of Christ the King, it is evident that we really look at what kingship means from the viewpoint of Jesus Christ. A very different viewpoint than our usual perception of royalty: wealth and power.

Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" 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. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

So are we listening to the voice of Jesus? Do we understand what Kingship in the eyes of God really means? This very day there will be people confessing their faith in Jesus, while accumulating wealth at the expense of others, using their power for their own greediness, and participating in harmful behaviors that cripple our

natural resources. We have people who claim to be followers of Jesus, Christians that do not love their neighbors or themselves.

So today, let's listen to the truth, the voice of Jesus, Christ the King.

We have scripture in which Jesus calls all the disciples together and says to them: "Look, among the Gentiles, those who are not part of God's chosen people, those that in power lorded over others -- lorded over others -- among you, it cannot be that way. The one who is to lead must be the servant, the slave of all."

Jesus approaches the wealthy and says with love, "If you want to truly follow me now, go sell everything you have. Give it to the poor then come and follow me. Don't depend on your riches any longer, your wealth. Follow me; live a life of simplicity -- of poverty -- having what you need, but not more than you need."

Jesus rejected violence. Even in the garden, at the risk of his life, one of his disciples says, "I must defend him. I must prevent this," and so he draws his sword and begins to flail with the sword, slicing off the ear of the high priest's servant. And even in the midst of being arrested Jesus heals the man's ear.

If you find it hard to understand why God would use the frailty of a man's body to house Divinity and allow that body to die to reconcile humanity, we are left with scripture that states, "My thoughts are not your thoughts; my ways are not your ways. As high as the heavens are above the earth, my ways are above your ways; my thoughts above your thoughts." We can't just follow the ways of the world, the ways of our flawed humanness that wants to dominate over others, that wants to

accumulate wealth, that wants to use force, and have fame and power. And we can not attribute our own success to our own doing.

When Gandhi says of Christianity, "It's never been tried; it hasn't failed, it just hasn't been tried," it is a call to each of us to try to live the way of Jesus and really change according to His ways and His thoughts.

We live in a nation that is ready to do just incredible, unbelievable violence to each other only to prove that they are in the right or that they (because of their wealth) deserve, in a way, to be "king." If we don't change our ways we could assist in the destruction of the whole planet and everyone on it.

The great Christian theologian, Eugene Peterson, writes. "If we are going to truly live a Christian life and not just use the word "Christian" to disguise our narcissistic and Promethean attempts at a spirituality without worshiping God and without being addressed by God, it is necessary to return to Square One and adore God and listen to God. Lest we be rendered vulnerable to every latest edition of journalistic spirituality."

This morning then, as we are called to celebrate this Feast of Christ the King, I think we must acknowledge that in so many ways, this idea of Jesus being a king goes against the genuine way of Jesus. Because he rejected power over others. He wanted to be the servant of all. He rejected excessive wealth; he wanted everyone to share in the goods of the world that God made for all, and not for just a few.

We are about to enter into Advent. The time of waiting with bated breath, the time of pregnancy, the time of expectation. This year we will focus on the hope and light that needs so desperately to be prayed into the world this season.

I want to remind you that as we end the season of Pentecost with Christ the King – however misleading a naming, we not only look for Christ the babe in the manger, but also for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Throughout the Gospels Jesus shows us what real power is; humility, sacrifice, and community. If we call ourselves followers of Jesus, “Christians”, then we have to strive to give true Christianity a try. We have to let the manner of Jesus’ Kingship lead the way.

We need to pray that we, in our faith, can bring about the reign of God. Which is where God's ways permeate our ways, God's thoughts become our thoughts, and this way leads to the fullness of life, peace in this world, and peace forever in the reign of God.

Welcome to Christ the Lord, where we are willing to give Christianity a try. Amen