

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA

The Second Sunday of Lent: March 16, 2025

God's Kingdom

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Good morning and welcome to Christ the Lord Church on the second Sunday of Lent. Today's Gospel is again, part of the long journey to Jerusalem. But more than that, it is showing us Jesus' fearless path to the kingdom of God.

Jesus understands that the prophets and those in the past had been judged and judged harshly by Jerusalem. He is also on his own journey toward his death. These glimpses of Jesus' remarks are not only for those around him to hear, but it also seems like Jesus may be processing his own future and what that means in regards to God's kingdom.

At first it seems that Jesus' reaction to the threat from the Pharisees is one of a jokester. Depending on the voice in which you read this scripture it can be seen as either a direct refusal from Jesus to let fear control his movements on this earth. Or as a gesturing away of any seriousness to threats because God controls the journey.

But either way, Jesus is showing those who threaten him that it will not deter him from his mission to cast out demons and perform cures. What at first seems like a dismissal of the Pharisees' remarks actually contains a much deeper message.

The significance of casting out demons for Jesus' ministry is given in Luke 11:20: "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you." Casting out demons is part of Jesus' battle against the devil.

In last week's Gospel we had the devil leaving Jesus after the temptations, until a more opportune time. Today's reading is almost a continuance against the devil and his desire to control the earth. Therefore, Jesus' remarks and action are a direct part of his establishment of the kingdom of God.

Performing cures is likewise a part of the fundamental character of Jesus' mission; announced in 4:18-19 as being "to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind." We recognize he is quoting Isaiah and also a statement about the establishment of God's kingdom.

To reinforce that Herod has no control over him, actually meaning, that Herod or the established leaders cannot stop God's kingdom from coming. Jesus adds that he will be doing these things "*today and tomorrow*".

When I hear him speak these words, I get such a strong sense of his resolve and commitment that I find myself encouraged to rethink what I understand about being safe.

For his part, Jesus was resolved to be the True Prophet of God, to take on the role of the Suffering Servant for the world. He was resolved and at peace (even if he prayed for the cup to be lifted) that his death was coming and would not be avoided.

And yet, his words are the kind that come from someone who knows that they are ultimately safe. Knowing that his death is coming, he is safe to be bold on his mission.

Jesus surely does not have *safety* in his earthly world. The government and the Pharisees will be part of the powers that lead him through the streets of Jerusalem bloody and beaten, only to be executed on a cross. He does not have safety from those foxes, so to speak, because in the end, God decided to use them as part of the work he has set out to accomplish.

But in the midst of this exchange, we understand that Jesus finds his comfort in the relationship that he has with God the Father. Then taking that one step further, ultimately into the work of savior as the work of Christ is to make us *safe*. Safe from sin and safe from ourselves by offering forgiveness, and providing a way to establish a closer relationship with God.

The Lenten journey is an invitation to try on something new in our posture towards God, and perhaps it is to try on the resolve and peace of Christ that passes understanding. Maybe it is to resolve to do God's work in the world, today and tomorrow and however many days after that.

That peace, which we might understand as what it is to be safe, might make us free to live even though we will die. It is the resolve of courage, hard work and sacrifice for the sake of others. Yes, there are foxes in this world of trouble, but there is plenty of room under the wings of heaven's heart.

In today's Gospel we see the compassion of God as Jesus proclaims, "How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"

We need to trust and be willing to allow God to gather us all under his wing. We need to trust that Christ is our safe space. We have lost some of our oldest and wisest elders who have survived the past global human atrocities. Those were the people that were safe in their faith. Those were the generation that gave me my faith.

Today we may think some of the rituals antiquated, or maybe some parts of our faith as not important. However, we are called by Jesus' example to live into the kingdom of God, to find peace and mercy even though we live in a sinful world.

Let us cast out demons in the name of the Lord, let us proclaim good news to the poor. But mostly, let us trust that no matter what, we are safe under the saving wings of Christ. Amen