



The Twenty-Seventh Sunday after Pentecost (B)
Christ the King Sunday
November 18, 2018
The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato

+May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

I have to admit that every year for this the last Sunday in the Season of Pentecost and the celebration of Christ the King, I struggle: Christ the King? Kings and queens are not what we are about in the United States.

As appealing as Buckingham Palace is with the pomp and ceremony in and around the monarchy in England, we are reminded that it is a constitutional monarchy: Queen, yes; Parliament with governing power, yes. Having said that, there is an aspect of a monarchy which has deeper meaning when it is associated with the word and actions of 'benevolence'.

The word, 'benevolence', isn't a word that we toss around in everyday conversation. A question might be as to when the last time was that any of us has used that word in relationship to a person in today's world? What might it mean to live into being a benevolent person to help create, foster and sustain a more benevolent society?

One resource defines the word, 'benevolent', with the following description: "well meaning, kindhearted, big-hearted, good-natured, good, compassionate, caring, altruistic, humanitarian, philanthropic, generous, magnanimous, munificent, unselfish, open handed". I would guess that most of us have examples of people in our lives who might fit some if not most of these descriptors.

(https://www.google.com/search?q=benevolent+meaning&rlz=1C1CHBD_enUS744US746&oq=benevolent&aqs=chrome..69i57j0l5.6254j1j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)

Personally, I can recall my Grandmother King, my mother's mother of English, Scottish and Irish heritage. She was a tiny little thing, all of about 4 ft. 11 inches tall. She was a God loving and fearing person who I don't recall ever said a 'bad' thing about anyone. She wasn't one to gossip. She was one for whom truth was truth, and truth was important to her. She and her father, my Great Grandfather Jones, read the Bible every day of their lives. For me, he and my Grandmother were important examples of loving, caring, generous and unselfish people.

We live in a community, the greater Grand Rapids community, which is widely known as one of the more philanthropic and generous communities in the country. We can be proud of that.

We can be proud that there are amazing social service organizations which strive to be all they can be for those in need and for the right reasons. Many of those social service organizations are deeply rooted in the Christian Tradition, organizations such as Degage Ministries, Heartside Ministries, Guiding Light, The Salvation Army and the list goes on.

When we talk about Christ the King Sunday, we are really concerned with an aspect of the reign of God known as the Kingdom of God. In years past, that Kingdom of God was thought to be "beyond the blue". In other words, the Kingdom of God would materialize after this world has passed away.

Today, many churches in the Episcopal/Anglican Tradition refer to today's celebration as the Reign of Christ

Sunday. In contemporary theology, we live, move and have our being in the current reign of Christ. The word, 'reign', is more active, less static than kingdom.

God's Kingdom, God's Reign, is here and now. God's reign is in our midst. Who do we think is responsible for that reign, shaping and informing our lives and the lives of our sisters and brothers in our midst?

Do we believe in a God who manipulates the world in which we live? Or, do we believe in a God for whom we as God's creatures are stewards of creation and that God works in and through us? What is our role, our responsibility, in caring for God's creation and all of God's people whether they are at our southern border or attempting to recover from the disasters of hurricanes in Florida or fires in California?

In a recent *Christian Century* article, the author suggested the following: "Maybe the Kingdom of God is like Rod who came to the community meal and washed the dishes for weeks... Maybe the Kingdom of God is like Vincent who took out the recycling... At communion, three-year old Isabella busies herself with the drums that a drumming group left in the sanctuary... When it is time to sing the Lord's Prayer, she shows Gary how to tap the drum in time to the music... Maybe the kingdom passes through us like a stream. Living water cannot be long contained". (Amy Krykholm. *The Christian Century*. "Signs in the church kitchen: God's fleeting kingdom". November 21, 2018. Pages 11-12)

Maybe the Reign of God is our Breakfast Café, our Spa Days for women, and our Man Cave Days for men? Maybe it is our partnership with Degage Ministries, the East Leonard Elementary School, and our financial support of numerous social service organizations through our yearly budget? Maybe it is all that we do and seek to accomplish through the many ministries we offer here at St. Mark's? Maybe the Reign of God is right here in our midst, as we have come together as a community of faith to be nourished and fed and to grow and mature as followers of Jesus?

Maybe the Reign of God in Christ is shaping and forming us into benevolent, kind, loving and caring disciples of Jesus, compassionate people who Jesus would have us be with one another and in the world in which we live? Maybe the Reign of Christ is, as the Gospel of John tells us, "Everyone who belongs to the truth" and who "listens to the voice" of Jesus? Is it not his voice which calls us into relationship and calls us to be all we can be as his beloved in the beloved community of God?

Rhetorical Questions? No, not really, for in each question is already imbedded the answer.

On this Sunday, we come to the end of our liturgical journey. It began one year ago on the First Sunday of Advent. It ends today with the celebration of Jesus and all that he accomplished on earth and continues to accomplish in and through us his followers. I hope you find that to be engaging and exciting!

Beloved of Christ, we are called to be kind, caring and generous as the beloved of God. We can make a difference here and wherever we find ourselves. In and through us, we have potential to help change the world, to bring about all the 'good' of the reign of God in Jesus, now and in the future. Amen.