

# Sermon For Sunday, November 20, 2016 - "Hope Amidst All Things"

Christ the King Sunday  
November 20, 2016  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Decorah, Iowa  
Rev. Amy Zalk Larson

[Click here to read scripture passages for the day.](#)

## Hope Amidst All Things

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Today we mark Christ the King Sunday. It's a strange day in the church year. Many of us are uncomfortable with the concept of Christ as King. It is so removed from our lives in the modern world. It sounds so very hierarchical and patriarchal. It's a strange day and yet it does give us a chance to reflect on Christ's power, a helpful thing to do as the powers of the world rage and the nations are in an uproar. As we look at the world, we see so many powers that are opposed to God's ways of justice and mercy, so many forces that lead to hatred, violence, suffering and death. On Christ the King Sunday we are given a glimpse into how Christ relates to all these forces and how Christ is working with all these powers to bring about God's ways, God's dream for the world.

The letter to the Colossians that we heard earlier makes the startling claim that there is actually no thing, no force, no power, no ruler that exists without Christ. In him all things in heaven and on earth were created; he is before all things; in him all things hold together; and through him God is reconciled to all things. This is both comfort and challenge: the things that seem most real, the things that often seem most opposed to God - thrones, dominions, rulers, powers - do not have ultimate power. All things are under the rule of Christ, even if they don't know it yet. Christ is before all things, the head of all things. Christ creates, holds, and reconciles all things.

This is good news in a time when everything appears to be falling apart. It's a word of unity in a world marked by division and despair. It's a word that comes not to numb the pain nor to minimize the struggle, but to focus our attention on the one who is more powerful than all things. Yet if all things are under the rule of Christ, why are things such a mess? Why does it feel like *everything* is falling apart? Why doesn't Christ whip *all* things into shape and make everything better already?

Our Gospel reading today gives us a clue. Christ Jesus does not rule like any other ruler in our world. Jesus is named King of the Jews while he is hanging on a cross between two criminals. Jesus doesn't promise revenge to those who harm him, he offers forgiveness. Jesus doesn't come down off his cross to prove his power. Jesus remains on an instrument of torture and humiliation, in solidarity with all who suffer unjustly. Jesus doesn't attack all the forces and powers that oppose God and God's ways. He doesn't work to whip them all into shape under him. Instead he disarms them. Jesus disarms the powers by engaging them and showing that they have no power over him. The powers cannot make Jesus hate; he persists in loving. They cannot make him violent; he persists in forgiving. They cannot make him flee in fear; he enters into everything fearful and awful, even death.

Christ Jesus enters into all the violence, fear, and even death and engages it from within bringing love from hatred, forgiveness from violence, and even life from death. If Jesus would have chosen hatred or violence, those forces would have grown stronger. If Jesus had avoided death, it would have had more power. In Jesus we see that all the powers within and around us that oppose God cannot be attacked or avoided, they must be engaged and disarmed through the power of love. That love brings resurrection, reconciliation and the new kingdom. This is long, slow, hard work; yet it is the work the church is called to do.

Jesus calls us, his body on earth, to continue to engage the powers. He calls us to persist in loving in the face of hatred, to persist in forgiving in the face of violence, to not be afraid in the face of everything fearful and awful. This work calls for a particular perspective and a particular stance. The perspective we need is to remember that Christ is before and above all things and at work to reconcile all things to God. When we see all the forces and powers that oppose God, we need to look to Christ who has ultimate power and who uses the power of love to transform all things. The stance we need is that of Jesus on the cross. We need to be in the places where it seems hatred and violence reign and bear witness to the power of love. We also need to remember that all the things within each of us that oppose God need to be engaged as well. We have died to sin, death, and evil in the waters of baptism and we have been raised to new life in Christ. Each day we need to remember that death to sin and claim the new life we have in Christ.

This new life we've been given is for the sake of God's work of reconciling all things. Our life is not our own, it is not given only for us. We have been raised to new life so that God can continue the work of reconciliation through us. As we carry out this work, we are held in Christ who holds all things. In all things that we face, we are not alone, Christ is with us, engaging and disarming the powers and bringing new life. Let us now follow him into all things as he leads us.

But first, let us pray to know Christ's presence with us in all things.

Amen.