

Sermon for Sunday, November 20, 2022

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Christ the King Sunday

“All the Days of Our Lives”

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Decorah, Iowa

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Children's sermon

What is your favorite holiday?

What is another important day for you each year?

What are some other fun days that get you excited? ... *birthday, first day of school, snow days, long weekends from school, family vacations ...*

What is your favorite season?

Today we have a special day in the church, Christ the King Sunday, and next Sunday we start a whole new church year with the season of Advent. These can seem like strange days and strange seasons, but they can help us to think about our days and about how God is part of all the happy and regular and hard days of our lives.

Let's pray,

Thank you for all our days,

And for all the seasons.

Help us see you all the time.

Amen.

As the kids go back to their seats, I want to hear from the rest of you about the days of our lives.

How many of you struggle with Mondays? How many of you love Mondays now that you're retired? What are other important days or seasons on the calendar the kids didn't mention? I'm thinking of one that happens on April 15th... *Veteran's Day, Labor Day, Black History month ...*

As we think about important days in the culture and in the church calendar there is some overlap. Halloween comes from All Hallows Eve, a holy, hallowed eve. There's Christmas and Easter. How many days 'til Christmas and why do you know? When is Easter and how is the date figured out each year? Then there are some days that in the US are only marked by the church. What are some of the days?... *Epiphany, Pentecost, Ascension, Ash Wednesday, Holy week: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday ... Christ the King ...*

The Christian calendar is different, maybe a little odd in the eyes of the world. Today is Christ the King Sunday, the end of the church year. Next Sunday we begin a new church year with the season of Advent. Advent is odd because it puts the church out of step with the larger culture that's already singing about Rudolph and Mistletoe. Everywhere else the Christmas party is already in full swing. Yet, the Church waits in anticipation. In a culture that's all about instant gratification, Advent shapes us to be people of hope, people who long for comfort and joy, not just for ourselves but for the whole world. It is different and it is good. We're people that live with the promise, "you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you different."

Case in point: It's Christ the King Sunday, a day we celebrate that Jesus is Lord! Hurray! We recognize Christ's triumph over the grave, his defeat of the powers of sin, death and evil. Today we celebrate VICTORY! Right? Yes, and . . . it may sound a little different than we expect. See what you notice as we hear the Gospel. (We rise for the Gospel Acclamation.) What? That doesn't sound like a conquering king, hanging there on a cross with people making fun of him – that isn't right!

I'm picturing the little boy in *The Princess Bride* movie as his grandpa is reading him a fairy tale. Whenever something doesn't seem to be working out, when it looks like evil is winning and true love won't prevail, the boy stops his grandpa to say, "What, that can't be right!" If this story was a movie, just as the cries of save yourself got loud enough the king would reach out to summon his magic hammer or leap down from the cross. His followers would fling off their robes revealing swords and more appropriate fighting attire and kick butt.

Christ is a very different kind of king. Rather than conquering and knocking skulls, Christ gives of himself and forgives. Christ promises a criminal, an outcast, and all of us: There is a place for you in God's kingdom. Rather than escaping the suffering, Christ stays present to it, to us. Christ shares all of what it means to be human in solidarity with us. Even the worst of what we humans do can't stop Christ from loving, forgiving, and helping us to experience paradise, even today, in the presence of God. Rather than lording his power over others, Christ uses his power to be with, and for, and ultimately *within* each of us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ changes hearts and changes the world from within.

This changes how we can move through the days and seasons of our lives. Today, and every day, Christ is with us so we can experience a sense of paradise, now, in the presence of God. We don't have to wait until we die. Because of Christ's presence with us, all of our days are opportunities to practice love, mercy and solidarity. In all times, we can use our power with and for others. We can experience and help others to experience God's kingdom where well-being and justice, safety and righteousness flourish.

We have a different kind of calendar, a different kind of King, a different way of living in and through our days.

Thanks be to God.

Let's take a moment for silent prayer.