

Christ the King
(2020)

I take as my text today from St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians:

For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in Thy Sight, O Lord my Strength and my Redeemer.

Today, we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, which, one might say, theologically complements the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord. By that, I mean that this Feast Day focuses more clearly on that Truth which our Lord professes before Pilate, that He is King, but His Kingdom is not of this world.

Indeed, in the Collect for the Feast of Christ the King, our Lord is referred to as ***the King over all worlds.***

In the Gospel from St. John, we read the passage of our Lord's examination before Pilate in which we see more clearly that his claim to kingship is not as an earthly monarch, but as the absolute sovereign over ***the Truth.***

Such a claim before Pontius Pilate could only evoke skepticism. Although impressed with the personality of Jesus, Pilate had learned to scoff at any mention of the search for ***truth.*** He had seen Rome infested with sophists and theosophists, Greek and Oriental, each claiming to have a monopoly on ***the truth.***

However, for Pilate, though face-to-face with **Truth Incarnate**, his realm of experience precluded him from exploring further the possibility that Jesus might have the answer to his question.

As He stood before Pilate, it was clear that Jesus was in control. He was calm, even majestic, even though he had been mistreated and brutally beaten; even though the crowd was near riot and clamoring for his death. Pilate, perhaps sensing that it was Jesus who was in control, not himself, was unnerved, uneasy. Indeed, it was not only a question of **Truth**; it was a moment of truth.

Standing before Pilate, Jesus affirms that He is a King and sets forth the nature of His Kingdom. Moreover, He confirms His preexistence and the purpose of His incarnation.

And our Lord is clear: He does not challenge the authority of Pilate, but tells him pointedly from where his authority comes, not from Rome or the emperor, but from God.

More importantly, Jesus tells Pilate where Christ's Kingdom is and, by implication, what it is not, not worldly, but spiritual.

For the Christian community, the Kingship of Christ became an essential element of faith. And, in St. Paul's letters, especially the Epistle to the Colossians, we see the absolute power and authority of the **Word**, which is Jesus Christ.

Paul unravels for us, in his own complicated manner, the cosmical significance of Christ; that Christ is the **image** of God and prior to, in time, of all created beings, and that it was through His energy that all things seen and unseen were brought into being.

In St. Paul's words to the Colossians:

.... the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature; for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

These words of St. Paul to the Colossians are an inspiration for books, for tomes; and a short sermon is hardly adequate to be little more than an overly simplified introduction to the Majesty of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Foremost, as Christians, our experience of God must always be through Jesus Christ. We know from Scripture, from Moses to the Apostles, that man cannot *see God*: that is something beyond human experience. Our knowledge of God is always mediated through something within our realm of experience. For St. Paul, for us, the mediating experience is that of Jesus Christ, through whom we can see the Glory of God, as Christ is the image of the invisible God

Secondly, it is through Christ that we have salvation or redemption; He has translated us from a realm of darkness to a realm of light; He has brought us into the *new age*. We have been emancipated, through the forgiveness of sins, from the enslaving power of moral evil.

Thirdly, however the blessings of salvation may be described, it is by God's act alone that we are made capable of that salvation, as we read in St. Paul's Epistles:

We give thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light....

We give thanks to God for allowing us to see him through his Son Jesus Christ, through Whom we have been redeemed, and through Whom we may attain to life eternal as inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Christ has won for us the victory over sin and death; He has been enthroned at the right hand of God in heaven where He has preeminence in the universe and in the Church.

What Paul has done in those few verses from his Epistle to the Colossians is to sum up our Christian theology. He identifies Jesus Christ as the image of God, and he puts into perspective our relationship to Christ, indeed the relationship of all creation to Christ; that the creation of all things depends upon Him. Christ rules the universe which He created and sustains.

And the hope for us is described by Paul in these words:

And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven.

Only through the shedding of blood on the cross could we and all things in earth be redeemed, reconciled to God. Our redemption could not come about through non-incarnate angels as some false teachers had proclaimed; only through the incarnate Son of God, in Whom dwelt all the fullness of God's Grace, suffering death in the flesh, and rising as the *firstborn from the dead*, could reconciliation to God be effected.

Through all the Glory and the Majesty and the Power and the Awe, there has also been revealed to us a single aspect of God's Nature which defines the relationship between God and mankind; that aspect is Love.

That love was made manifest in the person of Jesus Christ, through whom the whole human race would be raised into fellowship with God.

As Christ has won the victory over sin and death, so, in union with Him, we, too, may be enabled to obtain that victory, and be united to our Father in Heaven.

As we strive to win the victory over sin and death, we do not go about it alone. Our salvation is found in and through the Church, and though we may often times look at it as a sort of mechanical process, it is not.

We have the Sacraments of the Church, two of which are necessary to salvation, according to the commands of our Lord; they are Baptism and the Lord's Supper, through which we receive the sustaining Holy Spirit.

We have the corporate worship of the Body of Christ, where, together, we offer praise and thanksgiving, and make petitions for ourselves and others.

And we know that Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, is present with us in corporate worship, as our Lord said so Himself: *Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there will I be also.*

And we have the two great commandments, to love God, and to love our neighbor.

In truth, unlike allegiance to an earthly king, our allegiance to Christ as our King is love-based. He loves us unconditionally, and we respond by loving Him. Gifts, both spiritual and material, flow from Him, and we respond by using them both to our benefit and to His Glory, and being good stewards, by returning a portion to Him in thanksgiving.

We acknowledge the Source of all Goodness, the Fountain of All Wisdom, the Essence of all Love.

We fulfill our allegiance to our King, and we complete our sacrifice, not in the burnt offerings of the Old Covenant, but in the living offerings of the New Covenant, where we offer up ourselves, our souls and bodies as living sacrifices.

Therefore, if Christ is our King, He should be foremost in our lives; He should rule our hearts and minds, and our souls. And we, as His subjects, should submit to Him completely, acknowledging the source of our being and giving Him due honor and praise, presenting ourselves to Him as a token of our love and faith.

Each day, we should declare our allegiance to Christ as our King, our Lord and Saviour, by endeavoring to follow His commandments to love God and to love our neighbor; by offering to God ourselves, our souls and bodies, in thanksgiving; by communicating with God through daily prayer; and by striving to be good stewards of the gifts He has given us, even offering a portion of the first-fruits of our labors.

Amazingly, God allows us the freedom to declare our allegiance to Christ the King. He has given us the freedom to love Him or to reject Him.

And when we come together in corporate worship as members of His Body, the Church, it is there where we continue to receive His Grace and Love and are nourished with the Bread of Heaven.

It is there, too, where our attention is focused on the Nature of Christ: that He is the Sovereign King of all creation.

And, while the powers of darkness may sway the world, for those in Christ, the night is past, the dawn has come, as St. Paul says:

Brethren, we give thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

Today, we celebrate the all-embracing authority and sovereignty of Jesus Christ, who is the absolute sovereign over **Truth**; we acknowledge the absolute power and authority of the **Word**, which is Jesus Christ, our heavenly King; and we declare our allegiance to Christ the King by freely accepting God's Grace and Love, that He may rule our hearts, our minds, and our souls.

Thus, in Jesus Christ we see the perfect revelation of the Godhead, and the perfect revelation of true humanity; we see God's creative power and perfect love; we see the reality of full salvation for all of creation

For all the earthly kings, and sovereigns are but temporal entities, whose power is limited; who pass away as the flowers of the field; but, in **truth**, the Kingdom of God is eternal.

Christ is King, sovereign Lord of all; His Kingdom not of this world, and we, as His subjects, we who bear witness to the **Truth**, are chosen and called out of this world into an eternal life of joy, peace, and love; a **truth** beautifully expressed in the words of the hymnist:

*Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of all nature,
O thou of God and man the Son; Thee will I cherish,
Thee will I honor, Thou, my soul's glory, joy, and crown.*