Year A: Christ the King Sunday - 2026

A light bulb went off in my brain this week that added a new dimension to this gospel. It was prompted by insights from The Rev. Canon Leonard L. Hamlin, at the National Cathedral. In the short daily recorded service of Morning Prayer, Canon Hamlin reflected on a passage from the gospel of Luke from the same timeframe as today's gospel; namely right before the events of Jesus arrest, trial, and passion.

The passage from Luke read: **"When Jesus came near [Jerusalem] and saw the city, he wept over it, saying 'If you, even you, had only recognized the things that make for peace!'"**

It was Jesus' weeping that me. Like many I had been under the false impression that the only time Jesus wept was at the grave of his friend Lazarus.

As to the light came to light in my brain? **What must our world look like, I wondered, through of Jesus' eyes?**

He saw the city and he wept. **'If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace!**"

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Today is the last Sunday in the church year. The excellent children's curriculum *Godly Play* describes this Sunday as a **"beginning that is like an ending and an ending that is like a beginning."** Such hopefulness, like the hopefulness we find in today's gospel.

It's only in "recent time" - 1970 to be exact - Christ the King Sunday was moved to the last Sunday of the church year. In 1925 Pope Pius XI introduced the day as world events - think World War One and the dethroning of many monarchies - threatened to dilute the influence of the Church in the west.[1]

The "King" sitting on his throne in today's gospel from Matthew speaks not through the lens of royalty, but from those of a shepherd, a recognizable sight still seen in the countryside of Israel.

Sitting on the Mount of Olives on the edge of Jerusalem, in their last hours together, Jesus continues his discussion about the "end times" with

[1] Andrew McGowan

parables about the bridegroom, landowner, and king, all connected by related themes of inclusion, exclusion, readiness, and living our faith.

In Jesus' time the people of Palestine would routinely tend flocks mixed with sheep and goats. All were cared for but in different ways. At night the sheep were separated from the goats: the sheep to enjoy the open air of the pasture, while the goats needed to be protected from the cold.[2]

The gospel builds on earlier themes in Matthew's gospel. Sitting on the Mount of Olives on the edge of Jerusalem, in their last hours together, Jesus continues his discussion about the "end times" with parables about the bridegroom, landowner, and king, all connected by related themes of inclusion, exclusion, readiness, and living our faith.

You may recall when the mother of two of Jesus' disciples came to Jesus asking if her sons could sit on either side of Jesus in the kingdom of heaven. The other disciples were irked by this request - which by the way, Jesus did not grant. Jesus gathered the disciples together and said **"whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and**

[2] Feasting on the Word, Year A, Volume 4, p 333.

whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve." (Matthew 20:26-28)

How our "own stuff" can get in the way of hearing the fullness of Jesus' promise of the kingdom of God! I expect I am not alone in that this gospel tugs at our intellect. Prompting us, perhaps, to ruminate over how much is enough to give, to evaluate the validity of the reasons a person is in need, or whether our offerings will be put to good use. Sensible perspectives to be sure, to be accompanied with the caution to safeguard from falling on the slippery slopes of allowing potential excuses to dilute the spirit of Christ.

As we all share times in our lives when we wonder how any light could possibly ever shine. A low time for me happened decades ago in the earliy years of my ministry when I was not certain I would be able to continue.

A transformation started one summer morning while listening to Garrison Keillor, the renowned story teller, read the poem of the day. The poem, "You should at times go out."by the late Elizabeth Daryush cut me to the quick as I thoroughly related to her verses about feeling alone:

You should at times go out, she wrote,

from where the faithful kneel,

visit the slums of doubt

and feel what the lost feel;

you should at times walk on,

away from your friend's ways,

go where the scorned have gone,

pass beyond blame and praise;[3]

Heard from. place of shame, loneliness, and uncertainty this poem about the unease of being apart brought about a deeper understanding of what Jesus meant in this Sermon on the Mount: **"Blessed are the poor in**

[3] The two remaining verses:
and at time you should quit
(ah yes) your sunny home,
sadly awhile should sit,
even in wrong's dark room

or ever, suddenly,
by simple bliss betrayed,
you shall be forced to flee,
unloved, alone, afraid.

Spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Gradually a way of being emerged from one driven by intellect and calculation to another way of being led by a heart yearning for Jesus' compassion and mercy.

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"Feed, Welcome, Clothe, Care, Visit." Jesus says near the end of his ministry. Accept that God created the world out of love. That God gave something of God's self in sending his Son, Jesus. Remember that my ministry was one of compassion and mercy. Unlimited compassion and mercy.

St. Teresa of Avila sums this up well:

"Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours."

Always we begin again…Let us continue to make a world that does not bring Jesus to tears…

In Christ's Name.