

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Christ Our King,
amen.

Today is Christ the King Sunday! It's the day we lift Christ up as our Lord and Savior, our highest good and ultimate goal, our King. On this day in the midst of everything going on in our world, I have to ask the question, difference does Jesus make in our lives? I mean here we are dealing with terrorism, mass shootings, wildfire devastation, and Paris literally burning with France on the verge of civil war and our own country more deeply divided than I've seen since those terrible days back in the 1960s, with all that and more going on, how does God's love impact our world, let alone our own daily lives? Just what do we mean when we say Christ is the "King anyway?" What does the word "King" mean to you? Is Christ claiming to be King even relevant in this post-Christian world in which we live?

When I sat down to write the sermon for today I played a little word association game. I thought of the word King and then tried to come up with as many 'Kings' as I could. Here's a few of what I came up with: "Ole' King Cole Was a Merrie Old Soul," Nat King Cole, Martin Luther King Jr., Billie Jean King, the King of Pop, Elvis, the King of Rock & Roll, the King of Soul, King Creole, King Midas, , the King of Queens and the King of Kings. We say a man is king of

his own castle. We sing, “Lead On, O King Eternal,” and “The King of Love my Shepherd Is.” I could go on, but you probably can think of even more...

When we think of a king, we think of someone who is on top of the world, or at least a country, someone with final say and authority. Usually this person is someone of great power or charisma, a person who plays the political cards just right, in order to keep atop the popularity wave. Or, in the case of a cruel and forceful king, we see a ruler who cares little for other people or their opinions, and acts only to ensure their own well-being, even to the point of oppressing their subjects. He’s not a king, yet, but a not so good example that comes to mind is the Crowned Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman. Prince MBS as he’s called is the man accused of ordering the brutal murder of the Washington Post reporter in Turkey and this guy is poised to become King of the biggest oil producing country in the world...He appears to be one of the most ruthless men ever to be in such a position of power. I shudder to think what will become of Saudi Arabia if and when he ascends to the throne...

Jesus was a different kind of king. He didn’t rule with an iron fist, or cater to the whims of popularity. He didn’t wield control over nations or defeat massive empires. He would never consider nor condone actions like what has happened inside the Saudi embassy in Turkey. His kingdom was spread individual by individual, one person at a time. One leper out of ten who acknowledged the giver

of the gift of healing, a widow's son raised to life, a woman freed from hemorrhaging, little children grasped in the Savior's loving embrace. Jesus' Kingdom was and is a Kingdom of love and so it is with us. Christ touched our lives, and we have come to know Christ as our king. We have experienced God's love, and know the joys that come from following Jesus, our Savior and our King. So we are bold to proclaim here today, "Christ is the king!"

But I ask you, "So What?" What does that mean for our lives when we leave this place of worship? What does it matter on Monday or Tuesday or Wednesday or for the other 51 weeks of the year, that Christ is the King? It's all well and good for us to proclaim Christ is king when we're here at church, among the ranks of the faithful, but what happens when we dare to proclaim "Christ is the King" in the company of people who may not agree? What happens when we dare to proclaim "Christ is the King" in the company of people who may not have ever heard about Christ our king, or may not have experienced Christ Jesus in the same way we have? People on the outside of Christianity may say that Christ has little or nothing to do with their lives, but they couldn't be further from the truth. Christ wants to be king of their lives just as much, as he wants to be king of our lives. Remember the parable of the lost sheep or the lost coin, Jesus said to the disciples, there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over the ninety-nine that never went astray or were lost. It is not the will of our heavenly Father

that one of these single solitary souls should be lost. Jesus was willing to give of himself, even sacrificing his own life, that not one would be lost. What are we willing to sacrifice, for the one who gave everything for you?

We live in a world filled with lost souls, and perhaps the most frightening thing is that many of these people don't know that they're lost. Many people, when questioned, would tell you they believe in "a God," but are completely at a loss for words if you were to ask them last time they actually went to church or what difference their belief in God actually makes in their lives. I've had actual regular church going folks, people you'd consider pillars of the Church say to me, "Pastor, Christianity is a private thing, between each person and God. It's none of my business what they believe or if they even believe at all. It's a free country." As Christ's Church on Earth, I'm afraid we've lost the sense of urgency once we leave the safe confines of this building...

So, what would we say to me if I ask you, "Christ is the king, well so what?" Are you able to, as Saint Paul says, "defend the joy within you?" Here's an even more pointed question: is it harder to share your faith with someone you know, or with a complete stranger? Or, have you ever even tried to share your faith with anyone... I suspect most Christians simply never think about sharing their faith with anyone, friend or stranger. We're all too politically correct. We're taught from an early age not to talk about religion or politics. After all, we don't want to

make someone feel uncomfortable or step on their faith if it happens to differ from ours. It's so much easier to put the bushel basket over our light of faith than to let the light of Christ shine on the lamp stand on our life. From my own personal experience, it's much easier and safer to pretend I didn't hear the off-color joke, instead of calling the person out for an obvious racial slur. Even for a theologically trained, called, and ordained Pastor, it's sometimes just easier to remain silent about issues faith. I mean when I hear people say things I know are not Christian, I don't want to hurt their feelings and I really don't want them to think I'm lording my knowledge and training over them or trying to make them see how smart I am... I want people to like me so I usually stay silent. I want people I know to think they can talk to me without getting into a theological discussion or being on the receiving end of a morality lecture... So, I bite my lip and stay silent and my own faith stays hidden under a bushel basket. Now if that happens to someone who is seminary trained and whose gifts have been affirmed by candidacy committees and the call of the Church, I can only imagine how deeply buried the actual words of faith are to the average Christian... When out of town guests arrive, it's easier to just skip church instead of letting them know how important worshipping God is to us.

Christ gave his life so that we may never be separated from God again.
Jesus rose from the grave so that not even death can separate us from God's love.

Through our baptism, we are put to death with Christ, so that we don't need to be concerned with the trappings of this world, or what other people will think of us if they find out how much Jesus means to us. We don't need to worry about our lives, because God will take care of us. In the Gospel today, Jesus talks about the truth. The truth is, our lives are not our own, because Jesus lives in us. When Christ is king of our lives, we don't need to worry. Since God is busy providing for our needs, we are free to be busy living for others, free to invite others to meet the God who meets us in Word and Sacrament.

So we proclaim, "Christ is King!" What does that look like in your life? I'm not asking this in any kind of a judgmental way. This is simply an invitation for each of us to take stock of where we stand in relationship to the one we call our King. As we celebrate this Christ the King Sunday, the invitation to you is to answer the question, "So what?" How is Christ king of your life? How is your life different because God has laid claim on your life? How can you improve your relationship with King Jesus, striving to love him with all your heart and soul and mind and strength?

As you seek to answer these questions today and every day, may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds, in Christ Jesus our Lord and our King, amen.