

## Pastor Roy's sermon from Nov. 23, 2014 (Christ The King)

What is a good King? What is a good President? What is a good Prime Minister? Each leads according to his or her values for what is in a nation's best interest. Some leaders are mostly concerned with keeping their positions of power. Regardless of politics and values leaders have an advantage and sometimes take advantage of their power for some kind of personal gain. It's human nature to see narrowly and to focus first on our own concerns and needs and those of the people like us and to ignore the real needs of others with whom we have little or no knowledge or contact. This is true whether we are leaders or followers or just trying to stay out of the fray.

Today we celebrate Jesus as King. Jesus is a different kind of King. He is king according to the wisdom of the Old Testament proclaimed by Ezekiel today - A King who seeks the lost, brings back the straying, the weak--victims of injustice. Not a king who exalts himself but lifts up the least. Not a king of power, but of mercy. Not a king who shrinks the playing field of those who are included and welcomed, but extends the table of mercy outward in healing ways. A King who does not just dream and posture about inviting all to the table, but takes concrete steps to do so, even to the loss of his own comfort and position. Christ is a rare king indeed.

We need this kind of leadership today as much as in Jesus' day. Responding to his beckoning call, we follow King Jesus in this divine reign of love and mercy. It brings life and hope and peace. Sometimes it will get us in various sorts of trouble. It got Jesus in trouble. But, as I'm fond of saying, he believed there was more to life than staying alive for as long as possible. He threw in his lot with the Old Testament prophets who believed it was more important to be faithful to Yahweh than to selfishly, fearfully cling to the uncertain life we are granted as a gift. In the end the world is a better place because of those who live generously, seeking justice, following Jesus and the prophets in their wisdom and courage.

Are we willing to follow Jesus--this odd, powerless king who loves and serves and stands with the least even at the price of his own life?

We tend to judge leaders by their effectiveness. Are we better off today than we were 4 years ago? If we judge by the standards of Jesus, perhaps we should instead ask, "Are the least better off than they were 4 years ago?"

In living we make decisions and we have priorities. As we face challenges, do we stop to think about the Reign of Christ? To base our decisions upon compassion is a never ending struggle. Perhaps the earnest struggle is more important than whether or not we make the right decision. Sometimes we act at the personal level, sometimes at the institutional level. There are only so many resources available to us, so we choose benevolent non-profit organizations to act on our behalf, knowing that the ones we carefully choose can more effectively and compassionately act in a complex world filled with pain and hardship.

The reign of Christ is active and ongoing, today. It's not mainly about success and eliminating injustice. It's about seeking the good, caring through direct relationships as we can, working indirectly as we must. It's about reducing the brokenness. It's about sustaining life here on earth. It's not just about surviving, it's about living well. Not comfort at all cost, but compassion at all cost. Ultimately, it's about the wellness of all of creation. We have a part in that, as small as it may feel.

Then, at the end of the day, it's about letting go of all our efforts and releasing them into this gentle reign of God that is making all things well in God's own time. Not in our time. In God's time.

Today we praise Jesus Christ our King by working for justice and by resting in grace. Thanks be to God. Amen.