

Date: November 21, 2021 (Last After Pentecost)

1. Texts: 2 Samuel 23:1-7; Ps. 132:1-13; Revelation 1:4b-8; John 18:33-37.
2. Subject: Christology.
3. Topic: Christ the King.
4. Aim: inspire, encourage.
5. Proposition: "Christ is the King of people, not of lands."

## REJOICE, THE LORD IS KING??

We have to sing. There is no option.  
 Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
 doth its successive journeys run;  
 his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,  
 till moons shall wax and wane no more.

May be sung  
 congregationally or  
 presented through  
 YouTube, by a soloist, etc.

Let every creature rise and bring  
 peculiar honours to our King,  
 angels descend with songs again,  
 and earth repeat the loud Amen.<sup>1</sup>

Rejoice, the Lord is King! Your Lord and King adore!  
 Rejoice, give thanks and sing and triumph ever more.  
 Lift up your heart, lift up your voice:  
 rejoice; again I say, rejoice!

**NOTE: SECOND  
 HYMN WITH  
 DIFFERENT TUNE!**

He sits at God's right hand till all his foes submit,  
 and bow to his command, and fall beneath his feet.  
 Lift up your heart, lift up your voice:  
 rejoice; again I say, rejoice!<sup>2</sup>

We must praise God, for Jesus the Christ is King.

But it is nearly impossible to make sense of Christ the King or even of the Reign of Christ, which is what the feast day is now called. It is nearly impossible to say with any hope of truth that God is in control of everything. I understand that people want to find comfort in the assertion that God is in control. But the idea is untenable. If God is controlling everything, then he controlled the deaths of 6,000,000 Jews in World War II. If God is in control, then he killed 800,000

<sup>1</sup> "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun", *Common Praise 1998*, Toronto, 1998, no. 383.

<sup>2</sup> "Rejoice, the Lord is king", *Common Praise 1998*, Toronto, 1998, no. 379.

Rwandans in their genocide—and 228,000 people in the 2004 tsunami. If God is in control, then the cancers that killed my brother and father-in-law can be laid at God's feet. And God must have used the two nuclear bombs to kill 110,000 people in Japan. You see? I just can't accept that God is in control of everything.

So, if God is not in control of everything—of all our circumstances and situations—what does the Feast of Christ the King or the Reign of Christ actually mean?

Well, we usually say things like, "A king rules a kingdom." "Queen Elizabeth is Queen of England." But if we push at it a bit, we realize that she's not really the queen of the countryside. The king doesn't rule the land. Rather, the monarch is king or queen of the people. The king rules people, not land. If the people won't follow as the monarch leads, then the monarch disappears. Queen Elizabeth may be the largest landholder in Britain, but she is the constitutional monarch of the British people.

This can work as we celebrate the Reign of Christ.

Christ is King of Christians. He rules in our hearts. We pledge allegiance not to the Church but to him. We Christians are the subjects of our King. We surrender not to the Church but to our King.

This reality fits in well. God is not so much concerned with our situations and circumstances as he is with our souls, with our character. He is seeking not to rule our situations but rather our hearts. As we kneel in allegiance to our king, he makes us his ambassadors. The King commissions us to go forth in his name and touch other lives in ways that are similar to ours. The end result of our service to the King is eternal life in his presence. Our service to him pulls us into his love.

This reality fits in well. Faith is not a matter of *what you know*, but rather *who you know*, namely God as he is incarnated in Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. Faith is a relationship between people, between you and God. Faith is bounded by love for, trust in, self-sacrifice on behalf of and surrender to the King. And this is crucial: each of those aspects of faith must be chosen, acts of

our freewill. We choose to love God and must be free to choose. We choose trust, self-sacrifice and surrender, and must be free to choose. We allow Christ to rule in our hearts and can, at any point, reject him as king.

The list of horrors I cited earlier comes as a result of people not allowing God to rule in their hearts. God never made people do what they did. God never made creation turn on people. God is not in charge of climate change and global warming. Rather, throughout history, people have chosen to not love God, to not trust, sacrifice or surrender to him. By rejecting Christ as King, we are distancing ourselves from the source of love and life. That's why massacres and genocides occur. Those of us who draw away from the King are responsible for the terrors that spring from that withdrawal.

Now, we probably need to think aloud about those things that are not directly traceable back to human freewill, like the tsunamis or the floods or the cancers. It is possible to say that, over the millennia, as each generation pulls back from God, then there are unforeseen consequences, like climate change, global warming, disease, and starvation. In addition, if more people were submitting to the kingship of Christ, then we could more easily address circumstances like drought and famine—if we were truly the whole people of God.

But what about truly natural disasters, such as tsunamis and earthquakes. Who's in charge of them? Is God?

No one is in charge of them. Some things are not accidents created by neglectful humans. Some things are not consequences of human disobedience. Some things just happen. And in the midst of them, God is looking to see our quality of love and our capacity for sacrifice. Bad things happen even to good Christians, and God is looking in our hearts, to see if we can choose life and love, if we can choose his life and his love. God is not manipulating our circumstances, he is guiding our hearts.

That's because he's our King. He rules in our hearts. We are his appointed ambassadors and our job is to represent him through how we live and love. God rules us, and we allow him to rule.

So now we have to celebrate the Feast of the Reign of Christ. That's what got us started on this rather complicated journey of faith. And I think that the most appropriate way to celebrate this feast is to surrender ourselves again and again to Christ the King. We pull deeper and deeper into his love and life. We choose to trust him more completely and to sacrifice ourselves for him in more genuine ways. We proclaim to the world that Christ is our King by how we live and move and have our being. Such would be a fitting celebration of the Reign of Christ.

AMEN.