



## **The Feast of Christ the King: St. John the Beloved, Shaughnessy**

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### **Matthew 25:31-46**

Jesus said, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

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I knew that my son Evan had reached a new stage of development when he, a rather easy-going toddler, behaved differently one day when asked to pick up the toys that lay strewn about his closet-sized room in our first house in South Carolina.

"Evan, it's time to pick up your toys and get ready for your bath." I said in a soothing motherly tone. No response.

“Evan, it’s time to pick up your toys and get ready for your bath,” I said again, this time a little more insistent. No response.

“Son,” I said, “I need for you to pick up your toys.”

Evan stood motionless and expressionless, all three feet of him, a new and noticeable starch in his arms and legs.

“You’re not the boss of me,” he said.

“You’re not the boss of me?” I echoed with disbelief. “You’re not the boss of me?” And with that I chased him out of the room and through the house as he shrieked first with resistance and then with pleasure. And, oh, by the way, he did end up picking up those toys.

There are so many times I’ve wanted to say “You’re not the boss of me” to a whole host of authority figures in my life—to my own parental bosses, to my workplace bosses, to my church bosses, to governmental bosses, to cultural bosses, even to certain parts of myself: “You are not the boss of me!”

But the truth is that each of us has a whole host of bosses—people or things we’re accountable to, people to whom we have given the power to tell us what to do or to influence us, people we have not consciously given that power to but who have power over us, nonetheless. And we have a mixed response to these, sometimes accepting their power over us as legitimate and right and other times not. “You are not the boss of me.”

And so it’s interesting this morning to be celebrating The Feast of Christ the King—the one, as our reading from the Letter to the Ephesians says, who has been put “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come,” in other words who has been given dominion over all, over everything and everyone, now and forever.

Yes, it’s interesting because on the one hand, what we’re saying when we declare Christ as King is something about who and what is not the ultimate boss of us and, on the other hand, we’re saying something about what does have ultimate authority for us, that is, what grasps us with an urgency and power in a way that leads to action.

And so, first, who or what does Christ the King dethrone in our lives? If Christ is King, who or what no longer holds ultimate sway over us? It, of course, is a very long list. Presidents, Premiers, Kings, Queens, Governors, Mayors, and governments of all kinds; Popes, Bishops, ministers, rectors, parish councils, and religious authorities of all kinds; CEOs, managers, supervisors, department heads and all kinds of workplace bosses; fathers, mothers, partners, husbands, wives, children, and all kinds of bosses in family life. But there’s even more—these also are things that Christ the King dethrones in our lives: ideologies, political affiliations, allegiances, beliefs; memories, aspirations, dreams, gender, sexual orientation, age, vulnerabilities, betrayals, physical wounds, psychological and spiritual wounds. “Christ the King” means that these, all of these, all of these have lost their ultimate, their ultimate dominion over us, have lost any power they might have had to tyrannize us, have lost any power they might have had to determine who we are, have lost any power they

might have had to “lord” it over us in a way that robs us and through us rob the world itself of its humanity, its dignity, its hope and its freedom for the future.

Christ the King dethrones

But along with this dethroning of so many people and things, “Christ the King” also means that something or someone else has come to sit upon the throne of our hearts, to sit at the center of who we are, influencing how we see the world and what we do as a result of this influence. This something or someone else has a voice all his own and a particular way that he touches the world, for Christ as King means that none other than the Holy and Human One, the Crucified and Resurrected One sits upon the throne of our hearts, the One who has come into the world at great cost to live our lives and has done this to befriend us and to befriend all of humanity.

And so Christ as our King means that the power and voice of our own humanity along with the ability to touch the lives of others in costly ways—these are the ways we will live. And, of course, as our gospel makes clear, one important group whose lives we are to touch in costly ways are the needy of the world, those who would be easy to turn away from or even demonize—the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, strangers and prisoners. Our relationship with these and our actions on their behalf is a part of Christ’s kingship in our lives, a kingship that makes us all kin.

In the prologue to his book entitled *Leadership Jazz*, Max Depree, former CEO of Herman Miller, tells this story:

“Esther, my wife and I have a granddaughter named Zoe, the Greek word for “life.” She was born prematurely and weighed one pound, seven ounces, so small that my wedding ring could slide up her arm to her shoulder. The neonatologist who first examined her told us that she had a 5 to 10 percent chance of living three days.. When Esther and I scrubbed up for our first visit and saw Zoe in her isolette in the neonatal intensive care unit, she had two IVs in her naval, one in her foot, a monitor on each side of her chest, and a respirator tube and a feeding tube in her mouth.

To complicate matters, Zoe’s biological father had (left) the month before Zoe was born. Realizing this, a wise and caring nurse named Ruth gave me my instructions. “For the next several months, at least, you’re the surrogate father. I want you to come to the hospital every day to visit Zoe, and when you come, I would like you to rub her body and her legs and her arms with the tip of your finger. While you’re caressing her, you should tell her over and over how much you love her, because she has to be able to connect your voice to your touch.”

Depree then goes on to say: “Ruth was doing exactly the right thing on Zoe’s behalf (and, of course, on my behalf as well), and without realizing it she was giving me one of the best possible descriptions of the work of a leader. At the core of becoming a leader is the need always to connect one’s voice (of love, care and hope) and one’s touch.”

This morning on The Feast of Christ the King, I would also add that at the core of becoming a more faithful Christian is the need to connect *our* voice of love, care and hope with *our* touch.

Where in your life do you need to connect your voice of love and care to the way you touch someone's life? And right along with this, where in the life of this parish does the same thing need to occur? Where does this parish's voice, a voice free from anything in the past that would tyrannize it, where does this parish's voice of love, care and hope need to express itself now in a way that it touches the world?

For this is what the celebration of The Feast of Christ the King is all about: the radical freedom we have been given by the one who dethrones anything that would hold us back from our full humanity and the new life that it brings, and the privilege we have been given both to speak and to bring that full humanity to life in action. In action.

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#### Works Cited or Consulted

Max Depree, *Leadership Jazzy: The Essential Elements of a Great Leader*