

Christ the King
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During the past year, nearly all of the gospels we have heard have been taken from the Gospel according to Mark. As we listened to the Gospel of St. Mark, we heard Jesus proclaim again and again that the kingdom of God at hand; indeed, the kingdom of God is here in the person of Jesus.

The whole of Jesus' ministry proclaims the kingdom of God. When he cures the sick, when he expels demons, and when he raises the dead, Jesus shows that kingdom of God is at hand. When he preaches good news to the poor and forgives sinners, Jesus shows that the kingdom of God is at hand. And when he goes to Jerusalem to suffer and die, Jesus faces his death with the firm conviction that his passion will bring about the kingdom of God.

And so today, as we celebrate this Feast of Jesus Christ, king of the Universe, we proclaim our own faith in the kingdom of God. We proclaim to the world that God rules over our lives. We proclaim to each other that Jesus Christ is the goal and purpose of our lives. We confess that this infinitely expansive universe, in which we are like specks of dust, finds its meaning, its purpose, and its goal in Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God.

The world, however, does not believe this. For the world, there is no kingdom of God; there is only the kingdom of Man. For the world, it is not God who rules but *we* who are in charge. For the world, we—not Jesus Christ—are the goal and purpose of the universe. The world thinks it controls its own destiny, and so it has no need for God. For the world it is utter nonsense to proclaim that Jesus Christ is the king of the universe.

Pontius Pilate reveals the attitude of the world. As Jesus stands before him, Pilate sneers in disbelief, "*you, you* are the king of the Jews!" Pontius Pilate looks at Jesus and sees a pitiable man, a failure, someone betrayed by his own people. Pilate cannot, Pilate will not believe that this man is a king, much less the king of the universe.

But even though Pilate refuses to understand, Jesus tells him, "My kingdom does not belong to this world ... my kingdom is not here." Yes, Jesus says, "I am a king, but not the kind of king you and the world expect." Yes, Jesus is a king but he does not exercise his power through force and might. Yes, Jesus is a king but he does not lord his authority over his subjects. Yes, Jesus is a king but he does not come to be served but to serve and to suffer for the sins of his people. Unlike other kings, Jesus exercises his power through suffering and death.

Pilate asks Jesus if he is a king, and Jesus responds that he came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth, Jesus says, listens to him. But Pilate does not listen to Jesus, and so he cannot understand the truth. Pilate refuses to understand what Jesus says; Pilate does not belong to the truth. Like the world that he

embodies, Pilate prefers what is false to what is true. And so he cannot believe that Jesus is a king.

The truth is that it is God who rules. The truth is that the ruler of the universe is Jesus Christ. The truth is that Christ is the Lord of our lives. The truth is that our lives find their purpose and meaning in God and Jesus Christ. The truth is that apart from God, we do not and cannot exist. Apart from God, we have no life. Apart from Jesus Christ, we are still in our sins.

This is why we proclaim that Jesus Christ is king. Christ rules over our lives so that we may live the fullness of life. Christ rules over our lives, so that we may live in the truth. Christ rules over our lives so that we may serve each other in love and devotion.

This feast of Christ the King marks the end of the church's liturgical year, the end of yet another year of grace. But it also heralds the beginning of a new year of grace that begins next week, the first Sunday of Advent. As we celebrate the Eucharist today, let us ask for the grace to proclaim that Jesus Christ is king so that we may live in the kingdom of God: a kingdom of truth and justice, a kingdom of love and peace, a kingdom in which all will be well because we confess that God and Christ are at the center of our lives.