

Christ the King Sunday
The Reverend John H. Brock

November 19, 2005
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

Psalm 95:1-7a; Ephesians 1:15-23; Matthew 25:31-46

Grace to you and peace from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen

It is Christ the King Sunday, so that means our church year is at an end. Our church year goes from the first Sunday in Advent, which is next Sunday, to the last Sunday of the year which is Christ the King. We have different seasons and in our church year those seasons have different colors to help us remember what those seasons are. Different symbols as well, again, to help us remember. Those are symbols and colors that are with us throughout the year but we use them to help remember certain parts and certain days of the year. So, tonight if you will forgive me, we will do just a little bit of reminding and educating as to why we have our colors and what they belong to. Christ the King the last day of the year, we obviously have white. The next season that we celebrate is the season of Advent. In Advent we have the color blue. So for the next four weeks we will be having the wonderful color blue. I am going to talk about the colors and then I am going to come back and talk about the symbols. We go from Advent to the season of Christmas. Though it might seem kind of silly, we jump back to white again. Advent, Christmas then we go into the season of Epiphany. Epiphany it's the wonderful color green, it has to share green though, because a couple of other seasons have green. Epiphany is followed by the season of Lent, which is purple. Lent is followed by a very, very short small season, Holy Week. Holy Week we tend to continue purple or we don't have any colors at all. Holy Week, then we rejoice afterwards with the great season of Easter, when we go back to white. The end of Easter is the celebration of Pentecost, the long, long season of Pentecost we go back to green.

Now there are some special days in there that we celebrate with red. One them is, which we just celebrated a couple of weeks ago, is Reformation, we do red. And a few other festival days we celebrate with red or we celebrate with white. I learned one thing about the colors, especially on a day that we celebrate for an individual. You might remember that in January we celebrate the days of St. Peter and St. Paul, those days we always celebrate with red. Other days, we can celebrate, like the Annunciation of Mary, we celebrate with white. And it depends if that person was killed for the faith, it is a red day; if they died in the faith in peaceful means, then it is a white day. It goes back and forth like that.

Now we have various and other symbols on here. Starting with our blue, I had to look at this a little while myself, to actually figure out what it is, and I am not exactly sure why we have this symbol on blue. So I am going to hypothesize cause these are the old paraments that we used before I came here. This is the bull with the wings on it which is the symbol of St. Luke. Luke being one of the four gospels. There are two books in the Bible that bear the name of Luke, the Gospel and then the follow-up book of Acts. Now the reason I think we have the bull on here, the symbol of Luke, is because what is the most familiar story that we hear during the season of Advent. We hear the story of Jesus' birth, and that is in primarily Luke's Gospel. I am guessing that's why we have the symbol for Luke on the blue parament.

Let me get back to the purple. The red parament as I said is the main Sunday we celebrate is for the Reformation and we have on here Luther's Rose. The reminder that the blackness is for the sin, but the heart is for the fact that Jesus loves us even despite

the fact that we are sinful. On the green we have a relatively simple cross. This is more of a Celtic cross that has a circle in the background, is also a symbol to help us remember the Trinity. The insertion of the cross into the on going circle, the never ending circle, the way that God is never ending. Going to come back to the purple. The white, here we have on the white in celebration of the season of Easter we've got the Lamb in front of the Cross. We have the Lamb on there because we call Jesus the Lamb of God. We have the cross on there because the lamb was crucified on the cross.

Now why do we call Jesus the Lamb of God? I get this one a lot so I am momentarily going to sound like I am back in confirmation. Sorry about that, don't fall asleep. Okay, we call Jesus the Lamb of God because we have to go to the story of Passover. The story of Passover, when the people of Israel are in bondage in Egypt. They are slaves, and Moses and Pharaoh, they have this whole head butting thing of let the people go, no I am not going to let the people go, if you don't let the people go God is going to get you. Bring it on, so okay it comes on, and Pharaoh says okay you got to stop and so Moses prays and it stops. Moses goes to Pharaoh and says you got to let the people go now and Pharaoh says no I am not because I was just joking. And so they do this nine times until finally the tenth time that the angel of death comes to the people. God speaks to Moses and says, okay this time Pharaoh's really going to let your people go. I want you to do a couple of things. First of all I want you to go out into your flocks and find a lamb without any kind of blemish on it. Keep that fact in the back of your mind for a minute. Take a lamb without any kind of blemish on it. When you kill it you are going to collect the blood and you're going to do something very special with that blood. You're going to take that blood and you're going to take a paint brush and you're going to paint that blood on the door post and on the lintel so that the front of your door is painted in blood red. So that when the angel of death comes, every house that it sees with that blood red on it, it's going to pass over. That is why we get the name of Passover for that celebration. As the people celebrated it over the years and the centuries, remember what they had to do, they had to take an unblemished lamb. That unblemished lamb came to symbolize all of their hopes and all of their sins as well. That lamb was sacrificed for them in order that they might live. We call Jesus, the Lamb of God, because Jesus died on the cross so that we too might live. Took upon himself our sins, so that the angel of death that would separate us from God will indeed *pass over* us. So that's why white with the celebration of Easter and Christmas we have the lamb on there with the cross.

Last symbol is here on the purple. Kind of a funny looking cross. It is called a Jerusalem Cross. Just one that is called a Jerusalem Cross, it's what the Crusaders used to help distinguish themselves in battle. But here in the middle we have this funny looking X and the P. For the longest time that's what I thought they were. I had to go to seminary to find out and I had to learn Greek. If you ever get a chance and have a lot of time, it's kind of fun to learn Greek. These two letters which look like an X and a P are really the first two letters in Greek of the word **Christos**. The Greek word, Christ. The X is the letter chi and what looks like the letter P is called the rho. So in English this would be the chr, but this symbol has become throughout the centuries a very easy mocker for Christians to identify themselves. The Emperor Constantine back in the late 200's early 300's AD had a vision that God spoke to him and said in this symbol you shall conqueror. So Constantine had all of his troops paint that symbol on their shields. They went forth, they won the battle and it was because of that battle that when Constantine became the ruler, became the emperor of the Roman Empire that he allowed Christianity to become a legalized religion. It's an abbreviation so that we can recognize one another. The Chi-Rho.

We have it through our building. We have it throughout many different Christian establishes. It is also the reason why we have that thing in the season that we are about to come up to. That word that is shortened that really still tends to tick me off even though I know the history behind it. So many of our advertisers will not call this the season of Christmas, but will call it the season of Xmas. Why do they call it Xmas? Well, they don't know it, but they are doing it because of this, because of that letter Chi. They don't really know they are doing it because of that, but that is the history behind it.

Okay, so we have different seasons of the church and we have different symbols and this is as I said this is the last Sunday of our church year, Christ the King Sunday. Next weekend as we gather together I will hopefully remember to greet you all by saying Happy New Year. You can greet one another that way as well. I know it has not been necessarily that deep of a theological message for us tonight, but I always like to remind us every now and then of why we see the things we do around us, why we do some of the things we do.

Let me just close by saying that the early Christians, the first century Christians, would gather together probably somewhere in a group around forty. Gosh there is about forty of us here tonight. They would gather in somebody's home, well this really isn't somebody's home, but they would gather together in a large room in somebody's home. They would gather together, they would sing songs, they would read scripture, they would pray, they would hear a message, and they would have a meal. We've sang songs, we've read scripture, we are going to pray, we're hearing a little bit of a message and we're going to celebrate a meal in just a few more minutes.

One of the things that I very much appreciate about our Lutheran liturgy is that it reaches back across the ages to help us remember that all Christians, no matter where they are in the world, or when they are in the world, we are united together. We are united together through the cross, we are untied together because of Christ, and it is in his name that we say, Amen.