

Christ the King Sunday  
The Reverend John H. Brock

5:30 p.m. Saturday, November 20, 2010  
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

Jeremiah 23:1-6; Luke 23:33-43

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

So did you hear the news? It was the big excitement that I saw on the news for the whole week. There was a big ten-minute segment on it the other morning on the morning programs. Prince William is engaged to Kate Middleton. Isn't that exciting? Aren't you thrilled? How many of you have already bought your tickets to go on over to take part in this extravagant affair? No, not yet, you're waiting to try to get a better deal, right? Because, by the amount of news coverage that happened, it just seemed like this was going to be, or will be, the event that is going to not only boost the morale of the people of the realm, but to hopefully encourage the economy also.

One of the television interviewers quoted the queen as having said that, while they realized England is in a bit of a recession, they don't want to go overboard. They're looking at spending only about oh, \$40 million dollars on this affair. Now, since I was the groom, I don't know exactly how much the Brock wedding cost. I am guessing though that it was a little bit less than \$40 million. I'm Not 100% positive on that, and my wedding was a few years ago, so I know that inflation has increased prices a bit.

I think it's amazing though how fascinated we all are. As I read some more about the royal family, I came to understand that, while there are many who would like William to be the next king, skipping his father Charles, but that is not the case. Because it is a Parliamentary Monarchy, that means that whatever happens with the Monarchy has to be approved by not only the Parliament of England, but all of the countries in which the Royal Family is at least, nominal heads of state. Places like Canada, Australia, and some Pacific islands that I've never heard of before. So, Charles, regardless of how well he might or might not be liked, he indeed will be the next King of England, assuming that he outlives his mother, who is in her eighties herself (Not that eighty is old, nothing against any of you who might be there. Charles though is sixty-two. William is in his twenties.) The poll though that went along with that article did say that over 50% of the people wanted Charles to be the next king and only about 20% ish or so felt that Charles should be "jumped over" and William should become the king.

This fascination that the American people have with the Royal Family, I just find quite interesting, because to the best of my memory, we don't deal well with kings. As a matter of fact, I think the last time that the American people really had any on-going relationship with a king, it was more of the *negative* realm, and we got rid of that king. I think that's what happened back in the 1700's. So we also, then, have a little bit of a difficult time trying to understand this day we celebrate "Christ the King" because we don't have a relationship with a king. We don't have an understanding of a king, at least not in a positive way, regardless of what might have happened with King George III back in the 1700's. Even when we look at

many of the kings today or those who might be king and all the difficulties that Charles had with his first wife. We really don't get this concept of what it is to be king.

Our first reading tonight from the prophet Jeremiah, Jeremiah is writing at a time, although he didn't necessarily know it before hand, but he's writing at a time when the kingships in the country of Judah are coming to an end. The northern kingdom of Israel had long been gone, over 100 years by the time that Jeremiah is writing them. As a matter of fact, the two chapters right before our reading tonight came from chapter 23 - chapters 21 and 22 - is this long diatribe of all of the lousy ways that the preceding kings have **not** taken care of the people of Judah. How the kings (how would you like these names: from Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, and Jehoiachin, I wouldn't name my children that) had not been good leaders. How they had abused their position. How they had used their position for personal gain. How they had not looked after their people. Jeremiah knows this is not the way a leader, this is not the way a ruler, this is not the way a king is suppose to deal with the people. When you don't take care of those whose care you are charged of, WHO is it that you are looking out for, Jeremiah asks? The kings are supposed to be the model. The prophet Micah put it this way, that kings are "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8b) That is what kings are called to be for their people. To be not only that witness of faith, but that witness of how we treat one another.

We Americans don't have kings, for good or for bad, but we do have the model of Christ, of Jesus as that shepherd, and when we think back of the stories that we have learned, the gospel messages, and the parables that Jesus gave, the interaction that Jesus had with those of his day, the actual physical interaction that people had with him, we see how Jesus dealt with war, and famine, and shortages of resources for people, for food. Jesus said, 'Those who have enough and those who have more than enough, share it with those who don't. Share your food with those who are starving, share with those who are barely surviving.' The problem is, like many three year olds, most of us don't share well.

With other shortages, Jesus says, 'Do you have enough? Then help out those who have none at all, ESPECIALLY those who are part of your own clan, your own tribe, your own city, but help out even those who aren't in your immediate circle.' The problem there is that excess is often intercepted by those who are too much like the kings of old, greedy and self centered. Jesus has talked of war, that it is going to happen, and it will always be with us. As a matter of fact, do you remember the gospel reading from last week, Jesus talked about the fact that there will come a time where you will hear about wars and rumors of wars and people come forth claiming to be the messiah, claiming to be him, but don't believe them, he says. Those false people who come forward, they won't be the true Messiah because they won't be looking out for you; they'll be looking out for themselves.

The reign of Christ which is what this Christ the King is supposed to be about, the reign of Christ is when we will all have enough. When we WILL know how to and ACTUALLY share with each other. "The days are surely coming says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch and he shall reign as king and deal

wisely and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. <sup>6</sup> In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety and this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is Our Righteousness.'" (Jeremiah 23:5-6)

Author Mary Elinor Johns wrote:

"Living under Christ's reign means we are called to stand behind those who model Christ's example, to love God and neighbor. We are called to see the value that God has bestowed on every human being and there by work toward justice and God's restoration for all people." (Feasting on the Word, Year C Volume 4 p318)

In that same commentary on Jeremiah, she goes on to talk about Elias Chacour, who is the archbishop of Galilee for the Melkite Greek Catholic Church. The archbishop addressed the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and he reminded them of the time when, there in the holy land, where he lives and serves, Jews, and Muslims, and Christians all lived and worked together in peace. It had happened before, and it can and will happen again, so long, the archbishop said, as people treat one another fairly and with care and NOT with brute force.

All of us, as believers, as Christians in the Lutheran tradition, or Christians in whatever tradition you come out of, all of us are called to live for that day when Christ will reign. We are called to work for that day when with Christ as our shepherd, we as the flock will truly look out for each other.

Amen.