



“King Jesus”

Christ the King Sunday
Saturday & Sunday, November 24–25, 2018

All Services
The Reverend John H. Brock
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

John 18:33–37

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

Today we're celebrating Christ the King
Sunday, which is the last Sunday in our church

year. Next week, we begin our new liturgical year with the First Sunday in Advent. I started thinking about all of the things that have happened over the past twelve months, around the world, here at Trinity, and in my own life. As I did so, I started wondering, when I looked back on the previous twelve or so months, how can I realistically say that “Christ is King”?

October of 2017, we had that tragic massacre at an outdoor concert in Las Vegas, that left 59 dead. A few weeks after that, there was that shooting in a Texas church, where 26 people were killed. In February, seventeen students were shot and killed at school in Parkland, Florida. More recently, there was that fellow in Colorado who was just sentenced for killing his wife and two young daughters, apparently because he couldn't be bothered to ask for a divorce. There was a gunman in a nightclub in California; eleven people were killed in Pittsburgh because of their *faith*; two more people shot and killed at a Jeffersontown, KY, Kroger grocery store because of their skin was the *wrong* color. And just this week, a disgruntled individual shot and killed his former fiancé' and two others at a Chicago hospital.

How can I claim Christ is king?

Okay, then, let's talk about the weather. This year saw major hurricane's, *plural*, one right after the other. There are drought conditions along the west coast, leading to some of the most devastating wild fires on record, with the death toll continuing to rise. Earthquakes, tsunamis, and floods have occurred worldwide. The *US Government* just released a paper on Friday warning about the dangers of global warming.

Weather and **war** work together in places like Yemen, where a report came out last week, based on United Nations numbers, that an estimated **85,000 children under the age of five** have died in the past three years due to malnutrition. And do I even dare bring up what has recently come to light about the sexual abuse within the Roman Catholic church?

Here, within our own congregation, well-loved people have received terminal diagnoses. Loved ones have died, some unexpectedly, others only after long term illness, or enduring

a disease that takes away the very essence of who they were, leaving some empty shell of a human, who barely resembles the original person. With all *these* things, and all *the other things* I haven't talked about or didn't hear about or can't even remember, because there are just so many that they run together, how can I stand up here and boldly and joyfully ring out "**Christ is King!**"?

I really don't know. Maybe it's because I could be dead a couple of times over due to my own health issues, or maybe I'm just way *too* cynical, but I really **don't believe** that I can, in good conscience, joyfully shout that right now.

So, instead, let me tell you what I ***do*** believe.

I believe we live in a fractured world. We live in a world that is *imperfect*, and *sin-filled*. I believe we live in a world where infants die, and smart, intelligent people get Alzheimer's. I believe we live in a world where we humans can mess with the environment to the point that where we might not be able to repair it. I believe we live in a world where people will kill one another over astoundingly stupid things, like the color of someone's skin, or access to drugs or money. Or, since we just all endured Black Friday, where people have been trampled to death in order for someone else to get a bargain on some **thing**.

I **also** believe that we live in a world where God **walks with us**. I believe that, in everything that happens to us, God is right there with us. Whether we feel God's presence or not, God is there. God is there in all the *good, happy, and joy-filled* stuff. And God is equally there when it hits the fan, in all the *illness*, in all the *awfulness* that happens each and every day. God does not ***cause*** the bad stuff. I believe, rather, that God *allows* the bad stuff to happen, *knowing* that each of us will have to make choices on how we deal with life when those lousy things trip us up. There **is** a difference between *causing* and *allowing*.

I don't say any of this lightly. I say this in part, because any God that would cause the death of my two-day old child, I don't want to have anything to do with that Gd. However, a God that *knows* we're going to have a difficult gestation, and that our child will be born premature, too soon, and not be able to survive for long outside his mother, and *knowing* that the death of our child will cause all kinds of *other* people to question their own faith, all the while strengthening my own faith, and that God is *still* willing to **not** interfere, **and is willing** to be with us, to love us and walk with us in our sorrow and in our grief, **that** is a God that I can love.

Today we are celebrating Christ the King Sunday. I think it's fairly safe to say that most of us here *can't* relate to that moniker "Christ the King," mainly because we're Americans, and we don't "do" monarchies. They're kind of difficult to comprehend. So, for the sake of our being able to understand it better, I'm going to call it the "*Reign of Christ*" Sunday.

Thing is, most of us, myself included, even though we're Christians, even though we believe in Christ, we really **don't** let Christ *reign* in our hearts. We **don't** allow Christ to rule our lives. Because, I don't know about you, but I am fairly *certain* I can lead my life by myself, thank you very much, I really *don't* need your help, Christ.

*Oh, yeah, it's nice of you, Jesus, to drop by every now and then, and to answer my prayers, when I'm praying for something I **want**, or especially when someone I love is **ill**, but ya know, for the most part, if you & me just want to get together on Sundays*

mornings (or maybe Saturday nights), we'll get along **just fine**.

No. *What if* we were to allow God, to allow Christ, to, honestly, rule in our hearts? To guide our actions? Not "make us feel guilty" so that we help out at the food bank or New Hope Ministry. *What if* we listened to what Christ **calls** us to do: **feed** those who are hungry, regardless of skin color, or ethnic heritage, or how it is that they came to be in their current circumstances?

What if we **housed** the homeless, despite their inability to speak English without an accent, or wanting to cook food that we don't like? *What if* we listened to, then more importantly, **acted on**, when Christ calls us to help the helpless, whether they're in another part of the world, or just a few doors down? What would our *lives* look like, what would the *world* look like, if all of us, if **any** of us, if **one** of us, were willing to risk *everything* this world tells us is right is good is "what we deserve"? *What if* we risk it all, to allow Christ to reign in our hearts?

This world is *still* going to be messed up. People will continue to listen to their inner demons and keep doing awful and terrible things. And God will still love them, regardless. The weather is not changing any time soon. It's been too long in making it messed up to quickly correct itself.

But if **we**, as a *people*, as a *congregation*, as an *individual*, if we allowed Christ to **truly reign** in our hearts, to be King of our lives, what would this world look like?

So why don't we?

Amen.

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