

Conley Memorial Presbyterian Church, Christ the King Sunday, November 20, 2016

King for Eternity
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November 20, 2016

Colossians 1:1-20

What does it mean to be a king or a queen? Today in most countries kings and queens are figureheads and government power lies in a parliament or an elected body.

That was not always the case. Historically kings were absolute monarchs and literally owned the country --- the land, the water, the game --- everything. If the king was benevolent, the people were provided with what they needed to live. If the king wasn't benevolent, a starving person who killed a deer to feed his family could be arrested and executed.

This is no longer the case for the most part and the title of king or queen, such as Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain, falls to someone whose position is more ceremonial than anything else.

Culturally we often use king or queen titles in a far less significant way. My middle name is King because, before I was born, my parents saw a picture of a baby sitting in a high chair with the caption, "King of the house." They liked that and my middle name became King. Actually they intended to make my first name King but, thankfully, shortly before I was born their landlord got a dog and named it King, so they changed their minds.

In the entertainment world we also have kings and queens. A long running radio and TV show was "Queen for a Day." It was a game show where, based upon audience reaction to the female contestants, one was selected as queen for a day. She would be dressed in a sable trimmed red velvet robe, be given a jeweled crown, be seated on a velvet-upholstered throne, and be given roses and a horde of gifts. But her tenure as queen lasted only for the duration of the broadcast.

More recently the pop music group Pierce the Veil had a hit song, "King for a Day." It wasn't an entertaining song, at least to me because, among other things, it was laced with profanity. I assume that some people must have liked the song but I am not one of them.

Now why am I giving you this history of what it meant to be a king or queen historically or in today's culture? It is to point out how greatly different the conception we have of kings and queens is from the true King for all eternity, Jesus the Christ.

These other rulers may have been tyrants, mere figureheads, or fleeting cultural or entertainment persons, but not the true King --- he is loving, benevolent and eternal.

Today is Christ the King Sunday, the last Sunday of the liturgical year. Next week begins the season of Advent when we look forward to celebrating the birth of our true King and to anticipating his second coming.

Christ the King Sunday was not formally celebrated until 1925. Hitler, Mussolini and other tyrants were beginning to show their ugly heads on the scene and in reaction to them Pope Pius IX established the Sunday before Advent as Christ the King Sunday to remind us that no matter who is in political power, Christ is really the King.

We elected a President less than two weeks ago. No matter who your choice was in the election, the people got to choose who would hold the office of President for at least four years, who would be de facto ruler of the country.

In truth we didn't choose a ruler. We have a representative form of government and what we did was choose someone to run the Executive Branch of government for a limited period of time. We also choose the members of the Legislative Branch, the House of Representatives and the Senate. But they too serve for a limited time. They aren't our rulers even though some of them may act like they are. We do however have an absolute monarch who we did not choose. He is Jesus Christ, our King for all of eternity. Presidents, Representatives and Senators come and go but Christ remains.

Peterson's The Message paraphrases our scripture reading from Colossians 1 saying, *"God rescued us from dead-end alleys and dark dungeons. He's set us up in the kingdom of the Son he loves so much, the Son who got us out of the pit we were in, got rid of the sins we were doomed to keep repeating.*

¹⁵⁻¹⁸ *We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see God's original purpose in everything created. For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank after rank of angels—everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him. He was there before any of it*

came into existence and holds it all together right up to this moment. And when it comes to the church, he organizes and holds it together, like a head does a body.

¹⁸⁻²⁰ He was supreme in the beginning and—leading the resurrection parade—he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end he’s there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is he, so roomy, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms—get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the cross.”

We have an eternal King.

“Paul reminds us that we have a new location in Christ ... Knowing that we have been relocated by His amazing grace into the kingdom of Jesus ... Jesus now reigns as King in our hearts, and minds, and we are His grateful subjects. His will is our will and His ways become patterns for all of life and behavior, And when we are forced to make a choice, our allegiance is to Him.” (Our Daily Bread, October 5, 2011).

In just four days we will celebrate Thanksgiving, a day to give thanks to God for all that he has given to us and to Jesus Christ as faithful subjects in his eternal Kingdom. Earthly kings and queens and elected leaders come and go but our true King remains with us forever.

Amen.