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November 10, 2024—Remembrance Sunday
Officiant –The Rev'd Steve Harnadek -- All Saint's Anglican Church

21 Samuel 23 1-7; Psalm 132: 1-12; Revelations 1: 4b-8; John 18: 33-37

The Reign of Christ

In the late 1800's the pope sent a letter to every king, potentate, and leader in the so-called "Christian" countries of the world to remind them that Christ is their supreme King, whose kingdom, unlike theirs, is eternal. This would be celebrated at a festival on a Sunday in October of that year, he declared.

Long after the world has forgotten the names of Putin of Russia, Kim Jon whatever of North Korea, and Donald Trump of the U S, Jesus will still reign. Long after all others return to dust, Jesus will still reign. These temporal authorities hold great power and command great militaries. They demand respect and deference as their subjects bow in fear and trembling. They have to be on guard at all times because they never know when someone will try to over throw them and dethrone them.

I don't mean to say that we shouldn't take our civic responsibilities and loyalties seriously (we should). I'm not saying that all civic authority is not important (it is). I am saying that in a tossup between King Jesus and King Pilate, choose Jesus!

In our Gospel reading we hear of two kings locked in a struggle. Jesus claimed that his kingdom is not of this world but that its power is eternal. Pilate was a king whose power was not eternal. Two kingdoms, two kinds of power, two kinds of authority. One king lived by the power of the sword, the other by the power of love. One loved power and money; the other gave it all away so no one is in need. One believed the weak should serve the strong. The other says, no, the first should be last and the last, first, and that those who are considered great among us should be the servants of all. One had many laws to enforce the peoples' obedience. The other has but two laws: love God and love your neighbour as yourself.

This is the one whom we serve who has no army or navy to keep us in line and to keep the stranger out. In fact, he went out of his way to seek out the most despised and those considered to be the worst sinners so that they could enter into his kingdom. Jesus confused earthly power as he reigned from the cross with nothing held back from serving the people he came to save. What strange power! In fact Jesus never had to watch his back, but willingly turned his back to those who would smite him.

In Ireland, at what was to become St Patrick's, Cashel Rock, St Patrick baptized King Argus in the 5th century. Somehow during the rite, Patrick leaned on his staff and pierced the king's foot. After the baptism, Patrick looked down, saw the blood and begged the king's forgiveness and asked why he suffered in silence. The king, so the story goes,

said that he thought it was part of the ritual. Well it's true. It is part of the ritual. Not of baptism but of salvation. Our king wasn't just pierced in the foot but in his hand, his side and his head

Jesus told Pilate that his kingdom is not of this world but is a kingdom of truth. This is wisdom Pilate could never understand and we, after a lifetime of hearing it, can barely understand ourselves. Pilate asked "what is truth?" when he should have asked "Who is truth?" Jesus is the way and the truth. In Jesus and his cross and resurrection we see God's authority trumping all human authority regardless of language, race, political affiliation or economic status.

Jesus gathers those who belong to him still today so that he can lead us into the truth and so that we do not lose our way amidst all that glitters and tempts to trap and seduce us.

Only Jesus' kingdom is everlasting. Whether we be rich or poor, in Jesus we are treated as honoured guests. Whether we be the oppressed or the oppressor, in Jesus forgiveness is the norm in his kingdom. If we be hungry, all are fed with the best food and drink at his table. In him there is no favouritism or rank for all are brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Human empires rise and fall. Only God's dominion will never pass away. Human rulers all die. "The King is dead" we say. With Jesus, our King, we say, "He is risen, he is risen, alleluia! He is risen."

At our baptism we were made members of this kingdom of truth, a kingdom certainly not of this world. In this chamber and through our relationship with each other, we get a glimpse of this glorious and grace-filled kingdom. At the Lord's table, as we shuffle along with each other we get another glimpse of this kingdom where we are one with the King of kings.

Of this mystery, of this salvation, we say "To God be the glory for ever and ever," through Jesus Christ our Lord.
