

Christ the King Sunday – November 24th, 2024
OUR GOD REIGNS

Prayer

Father, all glory and power to you forever and ever.

AMEN

Background – Christ the King

Today is the last Sunday of the church year. The paraments are white because we are celebrating, but what are we celebrating?

According to the lectionary, the appointed reading for the day, we can either celebrate the Sunday of the Fulfillment or Christ the King Sunday. The former focuses on the **events** of the final judgment, when the books are opened and those who belong to Christ, whose names are written in the Book of Life (Rev 13:8), join Him in heaven while those whose name are not written therein are given over to Satan for eternal torment. The latter shifts the focus from the events to **the person** – Jesus Christ, the Alpha and the Omega (verse 8), a king whose rule is eternal, whose kingdom will never be destroyed (Dan 7:14), and is not an earthly kingdom (John 18:36). Today, we are celebrating Christ the King.

Christ the King Sunday – November 24th, 2024
OUR GOD REIGNS

What about the King?

In thinking about the King and His kingdom, we need to remember that while we live in a linear world, one where we are bound by time, God is not. As the text says, Christ the King is the one (verse 8).

"who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

In what way is Jesus the one who was? Two things come to mind. The first is Jesus' role in creation, as recorded in John's Gospel (John 1:1-3)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made

The second is a class of appearances of the pre-incarnate Christ that theologians call Theophanies.

Jesus' appearing to Abraham (Gen 18) and wrestling with Jacob (Gen 32) are two specific examples of such appearances.

Christ the King Sunday – November 24th, 2024
OUR GOD REIGNS

More generally, the phrase “The angel of the Lord,” with the definitive **THE**, as opposed to the more universal **AN**, is also indicative of such an appearance (rather than merely being one of the many angels of the heavenly host). In most printed bibles, this is noted by the word **LORD** in small capitals.

In what way is Jesus the one who is? Primarily through His incarnation – His appearance in space and time, to be bound by time in the same way as His creatures. A new church year will begin next week with the season of advent, waiting for the birth of our incarnate Lord. His kingship was understood by the Magi, who came from modern day Persia to offer worship to the Christ child, albeit not immediately after he was born. Herod, the puppet King put in place by the Romans, was afraid that Jesus might be a rightful earthly King, and had many young boys put to death to try and kill Jesus as a toddler. We don’t know much about His childhood, but as an adult, our king had a career following the family business. At about age 30, He left that career and became an itinerant rabbi, teaching His disciples and healing the sick for about three years. In doing so, He upset the religious establishment, who conspired with

Christ the King Sunday – November 24th, 2024
OUR GOD REIGNS

the occupying Roman government to put Him to death on a cross, where, as it says in verses 5 and 7, He was pierced, both by nails and a spear, for our transgressions. But the grave could not contain the creator of the universe, and, as is noted in verse 5, three days after His death, He took up the life that He had laid down and continued to preach the Gospel, the forgiveness of sins for all who believe, cementing His position as the firstborn of the dead. And His kingdom is not some future event, but a current reign over all the earth, not from here, but from heaven above.

In what way is Jesus the one who is to come? In verse 7, John's Revelation includes the return of Christ, not to usher in a period of tribulation, but to complete the return of creation to its intended order. Then there will be that final judgement, the one that we could be celebrating.

Our God, who keeps His promises, has promised that (Matt 24:35)

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

and that there will be (Rev 21:1)

Christ the King Sunday – November 24th, 2024
OUR GOD REIGNS

"a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. . .

What about the Subjects?

A Kingdom has not only a king, but subjects as well. We are subjects, citizens of Christ's Kingdom (Phil 3:20) and (2 Cor 5:20) according to Paul

ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.

We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God

How did we become citizens? On earth, your citizenship can come from your birthplace, your parents, or sometimes even from your choice. Citizenship in the Kingdom of God doesn't come from our parents or from our choices, but from our second birth through water and the words at Baptism.

We are also, as it says in verse 6, a kingdom of priests. Peter confirms this when he declared (1 Peter 2:9):

Christ the King Sunday – November 24th, 2024
OUR GOD REIGNS

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

And this message of reconciliation that we are to proclaim is simple and can be summarized in two words – grace and peace.

The message of grace, of the free gift that God offers through word and sacrament, is to tell everyone that “because of the death of the king who was, who is, and who will be, your sins have been forgiven and there is no longer any condemnation for sin”

The message of peace is likewise (Phil 4:7):

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus

AMEN