

SERMON

November 25, 2018

by Pastor Dan

Christ the King 2018

John 18:33-37

Did you know that every time we pray the Lord's Prayer we are committing a rather bold, political, act? You may think I'm crazy. But, seriously, the Lord's Prayer is political!

Every time we pray, "*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as in heaven...*" Every time we pray these words we are asking for God's kingdom to become *the* kingdom of this world. Every time we pray these words we're asking for God's way to become the way of this world.

It has nothing to do with any particular partisan politics in any country on this earth. It has nothing to do with the trappings of any particular party or government or constitution.

In fact, we're sort of praying against these things. "*Lord, help us to give up or exchange our kingdoms for your kingdom.*"

Or, at the very least, we're praying that the practices and the policies of our kingdoms would line up with the dreams and visions of God's kingdom.

Praying the Lord's Prayer does this. It asks for this, especially on Christ the King Sunday. So as my mother used to say, "*You be careful what you pray for.*"

This Christ the King festival is rather new to Christian calendars. It was only instituted in 1925 by Pope Pius the 11th. This is not the same Pius as the school over here is named for. That's Pius the 10th. (He's known for opposing modernism and reform).

While the church had always celebrated images of Christ as a king, the church really needed it then- in 1925. Mussolini had taken control of Italy for three years by then. Adolph Hitler was out of jail and his Nazi party was growing at a feverish pace by then. The world lay paralyzed by a Great Depression.

In such a time, Pius XI asserted, that, nevertheless, Christ is, "*King of the universe.*"

Despite the rise of powerful dictators, despite the widespread notion that religion was now just a “private matter” only for the individual, Christ the King asserted that, nevertheless, Jesus Christ is Lord and he shall reign forever.

To celebrate Christ the King was to make a faith statement. It was to make a political statement. You see, in 1925 it meant some risk.

And, in 33AD it meant some risk.

Jesus stands before a representative of the world’s greatest power of all time. Jesus stands in Pontius Pilate’s headquarters and speaks of his kingdom to come.

To admit he is a king seals his death. To suggest that he has a kingdom of any world, let alone, that world puts him in direct conflict with the ultimate ruler of the Empire. For there could be no other king of kings or lord of lords other than Caesar himself.

Jesus and anyone who followed him would be considered a threat and a challenge to the leader of the kingdom of this world.

And so, it comes as no surprise that Jesus is handed over to be crucified with every other prisoner who defied Rome.

When Pilate jokingly has a placard placed above Jesus’ head on the cross which read, “*The King of the Jews*,” he doesn’t understand that it is no joke.

For Jesus is the King - the true King of this world and the next.

In Jesus Christ, God’s kingdom meets and supersedes our kingdoms.

Dominic Crossan once said, “*In its simplest terms, the kingdom of God that Jesus announced and embodied is what life would be like on earth, here and now, if God were king and rulers of this world were not...*”

Imagine if God ruled the nations, and not Donald Trump, or Theresa May, or Angela Merkel, or Benjamin Netanyahu, or Kim Jong-il, or Vladimir Putin or...

What would the world be like if we all served Christ, as king?

How would we live if we engaged the political realities of our day as our Lord Jesus engaged the political realities of his day?

For one thing, the vicious attack ads of our recent elections would be out of bounds...

We would be more inclined to build people up than tear them down..

We would be more concerned with peace-making instead of war-mongering...

We would be more about the liberation of God's people than the exploitation of God's people...

We would insist that every human being on earth know the freedoms we've been privileged to enjoy...

We would be more about the business of including and welcoming people than excluding so many people...

We would focus more on mercy and forgiveness rather than vengeance...

We would reward generosity more than we'd reward greed...

We would identify ourselves less as Democrats or Republicans and more as Christians. Christians who follow a King. Who live in a kingdom that supersedes party and nation.

I used to follow a Facebook page for ELCA clergy. You have to be member of our clergy to participate in this continuing commentary and blog.

I remember two years last fall, just a few weeks before the Presidential election, one man - an ELCA pastor, was trying to argue that if Jesus were here today, voting in the election, he would obviously be a Democrat. And, he gave his reasons why.

Within the hour another pastor from that same part of the country argued that, no, in fact, Jesus would be a Republican - and, here's why.

And, on and on it went throughout the day. Pastors weighing in on this great debate.

Me? I was just frustrated to no end that they both lived in Indiana and they were too far away for me to go and slap them upside the head for being such poor examples of our vocation.

Christ is now and will be King of this country - and of everyone in this country. Christ is now and will be King of this earth - and of everyone on this earth.

We all serve *him*. We all honor *him* with our allegiance. We all do *his work* in the world, throughout the week, in the midst of whatever political realities we find ourselves.

Consequently, with all our hearts we pray, Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, **your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as in heaven. Amen.**