

The second reading today comes from the letter written by Paul to the church in Colossus. He writes this time, “so that [they] might live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in knowledge of God”. this is a love letter to the church, often called a hymn I heard it as a prayer that Paul offers that they will have a life that is strengthened will all power. Paul did not write this for the early believes to have something to hold onto for the future, he meant it to embolden and encourage the church in claiming their faith now, just as we can hear the same words 2000 years later and feel the same sense of boldness and power for ourselves.

Colossians 1:11-20

11 May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully  
12 giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you[b] to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; 16 for in[d] him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He himself is before all things, and in[e] him all things hold together. 18 He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Today the Church celebrates Christ the King Sunday or as it is better known in the Protestant Church, the Reign of Christ Sunday. This is the last Sunday in the liturgical church year, remembering that church-time is different from world-time. It means that next week we begin the season of Advent, which is all about waiting for the Christ. It seems appropriate that if we are going to spend some time waiting for Christ we should have a sense of who we are waiting for and why we are waiting for him. Reign of Christ Sunday invites us to think about what it means for us to live within the rule of Christ and it provides us an opportunity to acknowledge Christ as the head of the church and to give him the proper place and authority in our lives.

This celebration is a church tradition that goes back 91 years to Dec. 11, 1925 when a feast day was proclaimed by Pope Pius XI. Pius felt this was an important day because he saw that the world was in a difficult place, standing on the brink of WWII. We were in the grip of a worldwide economic depression, and people were desperately looking for answers. And there were some outspoken leaders who believed that they had answers to those questions. One was the Italian leader, Mussolini, who had just celebrated his third year in office. Another was a young rabble-rouser by the name of Adolf Hitler whose Nazi party was rapidly growing in popularity across Germany.

The world was watching, waiting for answers, and listening to these powerful men competing for the limelight, and the Pope felt that it was time to call on Christian people everywhere to declare their allegiance to the rule of Christ, not the rule of men.

So now we know the history of this day we need to figure out if it even means anything to us and what we are going to do about it. What does it mean for us to live in and into the reign of Christ?

Will you pray with me please? May the Words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts and minds be acceptable in your sight O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen

I think one of the most destructive forces at work in our world is the attitude that many of us seem to live by these days. The idea that we define our lives with the statement “it’s my life, I’ll live how I want.” On the one hand I can’t really argue with that because I admire the fierce independence of that statement, and to be painfully honest probably subscribe to that myself. On the other hand this does not keep me from thinking that even though the majority of us might think this way and live this way, I still see it is a formula for life that pretty much completely undermines all chance of real happiness.

I realize that is a pretty bold statement there, but I think I am starting to understand that when we live “it’s my life and I’ll live how I want” we begin to define who we are in comparison, almost in competition with others. Our stubborn insistence on “it’s my life” draws us into unclear, maybe even foolish thinking that if I live this way I win, but in order for me to win, someone else has to lose. When we base our life on this kind of win/lose scenario then everybody loses.

Somewhere, sometime, in our lives we have got to find some truth about who we are and how we live, the truth, if you will, about our very existence. I believe that truth is found in the fact that we were created, we were made to live in community with God’s whole creation, that means everyone and everything, that means that we were made for a higher purpose than “it’s my life.”

When we Christians live in such a me-centered world we lose track of our purpose and Paul’s letter today to the Colossians serves to pull us back and to re-center ourselves and to remind ourselves again of what it means to live in the Reign of

Christ, what it means when we hear the words “so that you may have life.” It is not so we can have our life to live it the way we want...it is so we can have Christ’s life to live out.

Within this letter, we are being reminded that we are made for something different, we are reminded that we are literally made for Christ; we are made to live our lives in service to others, not to be served ourselves. We are reminded here that we are not defined by our one-ness but that we are a part of the whole and the sooner we come to see ourselves as the body of Christ the sooner we can understand that we were made to live our lives in loving relationship with God and with others.

If our focus is on “it’s my life” we will always be on the edge but not fully incorporated into a community that includes all of God’s beloved, all of God’s creation.

Paul’s words reach up through the ages to remind us that we are restored to wholeness through Christ; we were and are re-made through Christ to live fully in community. When we take that on, and we take that on every time we call ourselves Christian, we really can no longer live “It’s my life to do with as I please. It is- it must- be Christ’s life that we live. And we need to live it knowing that it will not be easy and it will sometimes be darn right uncomfortable, but if we want to experience God’s kingdom come it is what we must do.

To live in the reign of Christ, we need to take a personal spiritual inventory to recognize all the ways Christ’s love has changed us personally and to give thanks and praise for all that his love does for us. But we also must understand that living in the Reign of Christ means that we must help others to live into that love as well...we need to own our Christianity and start living a radical, out-landishly, wildly-welcoming, open and affirming life. We must stop living under the rein of

“it’s my life” and starting living into the life that Christ gave us. We need to stop letting life buffet us and start finding our refuge in Christ. We need to give less authority to others and starting giving all authority to God. Our challenge is to put everything else aside and to let Christ reign in us today and every day.

If we accept that challenge, we understand that as Christians we are called to work harder and longer for justice because Christ is our model. Christ who went to the cross began the work of making peace there and that is the work that we are called on to complete. It is because of the cross, we can live in great confidence and joy that all the things that are so wrong will be made right and that Christ has already begun putting all things right. By inviting us into his kingdom, we are partners and co-inheritors of all things made right, and so we should work for justice and the righting of wrongs; we should work for peace and reconciliation, but we do these things because we know that all of this will be done in Christ."

As Julian of Norwich affirmed, “All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well.”