

Homily

November 26, 2023

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

28:33 – 38:07

Once again we come to this day, the conclusion of our Ordinary Time, and proclaim Christ as the King of the Universe. And yet, my brothers and sisters, most of us really don't understand what it is to be a king. We have so few left in this world to even consider. Oh yes, there's Charles and Beatrice.

But, **King of the Universe**. Charles and Beatrice don't seem to stack up to such a title, do they?

In fact, King for us, or Queen, typically is more of a concept of the head, as opposed to a reality that we can see.

I have a particular favorite king: St. Louis of France. He's my favorite because his memorial is on my birthday. And every year on my birthday, I get to ponder this kind, good leader of his people of the 12th century. One of the qualities of renown of this particular king, Louis, was that each week he fed up to one hundred people – the poor especially, at his own table. Or as they were eating there, he waited on them.

Amid all the cares he had and the responsibilities with which he was burdened, he met folks in their most basic need – food. And he gave them an ear. For he wished to lead them, just as much as he cared for his nobles.

Our considering a king of this type is not typical. But don't you think it should be?

In our First Reading from Ezekiel, the prophet lays before the leadership, both religious, as well as the king of the time, a challenge: "You have failed your people. They are in Babylon. They are in exile because you failed them."

But – the Prophet says – the Lord says, this,

I will shepherd my people. I will meet them in their most basic needs...

as exiles, as the lost, as hungry, as scattered. That is what I do.

I am the Shepherd.

The kings of Israel were supposed to be good shepherds. Not all of them were.

That takes us to Matthew 25:31 and following. It's a very familiar Gospel. We hear it every year on this day. What underlies it - this picture, this parable of the Kingdom? The face of God underlies it.

Our God, my brothers and sisters, is not a faceless entity. It is not the stuff of Star Trek or Star Wars. Our God, we know his face. Christ has put a face on the Divine. He has revealed the King that can be seen. The one who can be sought-out to listen.

This Christ, we know, identifies with the needy, the lost, the ones in need of attention and presence. This Christ displays a radical humility in identification with the concrete experience of humanity in its pain, hunger and neglect.

Throughout the Gospels, this is revealed. Christ at Christmas is one of us in his poverty and need. Born in a stable. His mother and guardian, Joseph are as well. Christ, during his life, is one with those around him in their poverty and need. It's constant in all four Gospels. And Christ in those great Three Days that we call the Triduum, clearly identifies with all aspects of human reality in his abandonment, betrayal, suffering unjustly, dying. And overcoming the sting of death.

Christ, as Universal King, clearly identifies with all humanity.

The Psalm says it again and again. Seek the Face of the Lord!

In Christ we have found that face, my brothers and sisters, clearly revealed in the Word, both Prophetic and Gospels.

There is an underlying principle in today's Gospel passage. It's the **Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.** That rule is rooted in the law of love. For us as Christians, in the love of Christ. It is an expression of the Divine Judgement we hear in the Gospel today.

Ironically, believers and unbelievers follow this rule. Every major religion in the world has some version of the Golden Rule. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

And Christ, for us, puts his face upon it, whether we recognize him or not. Christ is the object of our service. Those who serve in this way stand to the right at Judgment. As Christ cares, so all of humanity is called to care. The universality of salvation in and through Christ is clearly a truth affirmed in today's readings. And all humanity, as it's described in the Gospel, "the nations," are judged according to the same standard.

This is echoed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, specifically paragraph 847 and the paragraphs before and following that statement.

As the Church, the body of believers, we are to lead the way in fulfilling this rule of life. What we do emphasizes, indeed evangelizes the wonder of who Christ is. Perhaps we will lead others, then, to believe in Christ, by our Christ-like actions.

At the same time, those who do not know Christ may take up their knowledge of and belief in the Golden Rule and the Law of Love of Neighbor and unwittingly serve Christ in their fellow human beings.

Perhaps at times, my brothers and sisters, we might find ourselves arm in arm with people of other faiths, as we serve our common humanity. This is how we are to be the People of God. We are to care for humanity, in every person.

We do this now, before we are led together to our heavenly home by the God whose face has been seen in Christ and in the other.