

Sunday November 21, 2021
Church of St. John the Evangelist, Elora
Sunday Next Before Advent: Reign of Christ
Revelation 1:4b-8, Psalm 132: 1-13, John 18:33-37
Canon Paul Walker

Jesus, on trial before the Roman governor, Pilate, says, “My kingdom is not from this world.”

It doesn't appear to be the most compelling defence. To claim that you are not from these parts does not seem to be the most effective testimony to offer when you are on trial. But Jesus claims, and the gospel of John reinforces this, that he came to “testify to the truth.” And the truth is that Jesus is not from this world. It seems like such a weak testimony when your life depends on it.

But if Jesus *is* the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end; the one is, who was, and who is to come. If Jesus *is* the one who existed before time, before creation, the eternal Word of God made flesh. If Jesus *is* the one who reveals the glory of God on the earth. If Jesus *is* the one who came down from heaven to unite heaven on earth by being handed over by his own people to die, then offering such a testimony is indeed the truth.

And if Jesus holds all things in his hand, then he knows that being handed over to death by a

Roman governor is not going to be the last and final word.

In fact, for the eternal Word made flesh, being handed over to death becomes Jesus' coronation event.

Pilate is not aware of this, but Jesus knows that any of Pilate's power only comes from God. Pilate thinks that *he* has the power, and he washes his hands to delegate the decision of Jesus' sentence to the people, but any power that he has, or any power that the people have, actually comes from God. It is not their own.

“My kingdom is not from this world.” Jesus knows where the power comes from.

Jesus taught his followers to pray, “Thy kingdom come.”

This kingdom of God that has come in our midst breaks into the world and takes on all that threatens to destroy it, all that deceives, all that blames, and all that condemns. It comes in our midst to take on all that diminishes, all that distorts, and all that shames, and it does the most extraordinary thing. The kingdom of God comes into the world and instead of destroying, deceiving, diminishing, and distorting. Instead of blaming, shaming, and condemning, it leaves all of those

things completely powerless, and instead it offers life in all its fullness.

The kingdom of God that Jesus represents brings recovery of sight to the blind, freedom to the captive, liberation to the oppressed, cleansing to the leper, and healing to the lame. The kingdom of God that Jesus represents ushers in a new era. It is, as Jesus described it in the synagogue one day, “The year of the Lord’s favour.” It is a new thing.

“Greetings, favoured one, the Lord is with you.” Those are the words of the angel to Mary.

No wonder the angels, those heralds of glad tidings, sang so loudly. They were the ones from another world, who broke in to Abraham’s dreams, Jacob’s dreams, and Esther’s vision. The angels broke into Joseph’s dreams to say, “This is it, don’t let Mary go!” They were the ones who appeared to Mary, and the shepherds, and the Magi, and to anyone who would be open to listen, that this was good news. Go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place!

So they went with haste. What they would see taking place is the Kingdom of God coming down from heaven on earth and finally putting in place all the powers and principalities of this world so that they would tremble under the authority of the King of Kings. John the Baptist would see this. Mary

Magdalene would see this. Peter, James, John, Andrew, and Thomas would see this. Nathaniel would see it. The apostle Paul would see it, and hundreds of others would see it. They would see the glory of God, full of grace and truth in a manger, on a cross, and coming out of an empty tomb, and they would say, “We have seen the Lord.”

We have been given their testimony and it is captured for us most succinctly in the creeds.

On this last day of the Christian calendar, the Sunday next before Advent, when we celebrate the Reign of Christ, we pray that God would stir up our wills that we might receive the apostolic testimony. So that when we are faced, as we all are, with overwhelming circumstances that tell us God has abandoned us, or hope is lost, or we are forgotten, take heart and be of good courage. Take this sacrament to your comfort. Because Almighty God, the eternal Word, has come in our midst and under his gentle and loving rule, Jesus reigns over us all as our Good Shepherd, our King, and we hear his voice to say, “I am with you always, to the end of the world.”

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