

Date Preached	21-Nov-2021	Date Initiated	07-Nov-2021
Where Preached	SAK	Appointed Readings	Proper 29 (X the K), Yr B

" 'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God,
Who is and Who was and Who is to come. "



I have it on reliable authority that my predecessor at this Ambo was quite the Anglophile. My knowledge of and passion for all things English do not hold even a *small* candle to his, but we definitely have this in common. Now, I don't know about Roger, but as a devotee of all things English, *I'm* fairly enamored of the British monarchy: yes, of the pageantry and history; but more fundamentally, of the institution and its thousand-year existence ... of the idea (or, at least, the idea¹) that in one royal personage are encapsulated both the collective identity ... *and* the collective welfare ... of an entire diverse (and occasionally divided) people: the notion that in a single queen or king, reside both the *ethos* of a people and also the *fons*—the source—of their well-being ... of their *commonwealth*.

These are, as I said, more notions than realities, and I do not advocate our throwing off our republican—small *R*—form of government and crowning some supreme leader-for-life. But in this fractious, combative era ... in these times when governing is more about power than policy; when we're more bent on labeling one another than engaging in dialogue; when differences of opinion metastasize into loathing ... I honestly despair of our future as a people. What is in store for this nation in our lifetimes ... not to mention those of the two or three generations who follow us? And so, I wonder: What would it be like if, without revolution or conflict, we—as a people; indeed, as a *world*—were somehow united under one absolute and benevolent monarch? under one king or a queen who embodied every single inhabitant of this world and selflessly desired only what was best for us, as a human race?

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Well, as it turns out, these are not merely the inert musings of a hopeless idealist or naïve dreamer. For, my friends, *Christ is this King!* And today we celebrate His Kingship ... his Dominion ... over not just His followers, but, in fact, over all humanity.

- Each year on Christ the King Sunday,¹ we proclaim that in Jesus' becoming fully human ... all humanity was forever imbued with God's own divinity. Every human being who has ever existed is bound up in and united by the God-ly-ness Christ imparted to us in the Manger.

¹ Christ the King Sunday is the final Sunday in Ordinary Time (the season from after the Day of Pentecost until the beginning of Advent) each year. It is also the fourth and culminating Sunday of the lesser known (and unofficial) season of Kingdombtime—Sundays on which the propers (readings and collects) emphasize the current and total kingship of Christ over this world, as we turn toward Advent, when we will celebrate, first, the perfection of such kingship in Christ's second coming; and second, the coming—the advent—of that kingship in the Nativity at Bethlehem.

- Each year on Christ the King Sunday, we give thanks for Christ's deliverance of humanity from the hopelessness of our sinful nature. Every human being who has ever existed has *already been* saved by Christ's hanging upon the Cross.
- Each year on Christ the King Sunday, we celebrate the Peace-of-Christ ... the God-ordered-ness of all things ... the justice and the love and the mercy ... that Christ has instituted in the whole of creation. Blinkered by this world's distractions, we struggle mightily to perceive this. But, in truth, every human being who has ever existed possesses, through Christ's Rising Again, the sure path to the completeness of hope ... and the infinity of duration ... that is Eternal Life in God. The cost of Eternal Life is faith, and many—*many*, for one reason or another, judge that price to be too high. But we who have paid it know the divine irony: Because faith in Christ is complete freedom ... the cost of Eternal Life is, ultimately, free.²

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Therefore, on this day, not wholly unlike the Fourth of July in our *civil* lives, we celebrate, as Christians, the existence of 'one nation—indeed, one *world*—under Christ ... and all the liberty this affords us. But, also as on the Fourth of July, we are right to ask: What's the proper *tone* for this celebration? While some Christians choose triumphalism—the brash crowing and chest-thumping of self-congratulatory 'chosen ones' who lord their 'greater' knowledge over others—that's undoubtedly wrong: The cumulative message of Jesus' life and teaching is that the emblems of His Kingship are humility and servanthood. Other Christians choose intolerant, if well-intentioned, insistence: the breathless proclamation of Christ's Kingdom, accompanied by ham-handed attempts to convert people who hold other faiths (or none at all) to belief in Jesus ... with all the tact of a bulldozer. Although Jesus might admire their zeal, He fully embraces the breadth and diversity of God's creation. To impose religious hegemony, in His name, is to disrespect the dignity of all people that flows from Christ Himself.

No, the appropriate tone for Christ the King Sunday, it seems to me, is *peace*. As **citizens** of the Kingdom who believe in and claim its fullest promise, we are to *live* in peace ... with one another and with *all* God's creatures, human and otherwise. As **heralds** of the Kingdom, we are to *proclaim* Gods' peace, in word and deed. We are to give voice to our faith, without imposing it. And to act on our faith: opening ourselves to new opportunities and new neighbors, and helping to meet the often-dire needs in our community, without expecting a thing in return. And as **subjects** of the

² A world given over to Godliness, salvation and Eternal Life sounds strange ... perhaps even paradoxical ... to many of us, and so, we ask: If God so desires a world that fully reflects God's grace and perfection, why doesn't God simply make it so? If, in the Life, Death and Resurrection of God's Son, God has already instituted the full Kingship of Christ on earth, why can't we readily perceive it? I might proffer some windy, theologically speculative answers, but in the end, I think the only sure answer—however unsatisfying—is that God alone knows the reasons, and, in God's time (*i.e.*, most likely after our temporal lives have ceased), we'll come to understand them.

In the meanwhile, we live in something of a fairy tale world: a Kingdom that both already exists and is yet-to-be. The fact that the total Kingship of Christ has not yet been fully realized in humanity's existence, however, does not make it any less *true* ... but just means it awaits further revelation, for God has more to show us. We are, in fact, all fairly familiar with this *already-but-not-yet* state of existence, for it is a classic form of fairy tale we all grew up on: the princess who appears dead of poison, until her life is revealed by the kiss of a prince; a beastly creature whose true princely identity is revealed only by the love of another; a scrawny, apparently orphaned teenager who is revealed to be the next king of England when he pulls a sword from a stone.

Kingdom, we are bound to *bring about* the King's peace: confronting the conflicts that divide us; righting the injustices that stain us; and imparting the hope that inflames us.

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It is tempting, on this day, to over index either on the sovereignty and supremacy of Christ's Kingdom, idols that can leave us both smug and indolent; or on its invisibility, which can become a stumbling block that makes us cynical. But Jesus calls us to the middle way: to join our faith in the **already**-reality of His Kingship of this world ... *to* our **not-yet**-hope in its final revelation. Christ the King calls us both to rejoice that His Kingdom has come ... and pray that it comes soon; both to honor Him as King ... and to realize that He is; both to claim the Eternity He's engraced us with ... and to anticipate our receiving it. For "I am," He says "the Alpha and the Omega": the Beginning and the End; the Already and the Not-yet; the Lord God Almighty Who was ... and Who is ... and Who is to come. The once ... and future ... and always ... *King*.



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