

“Christ the King”

Colossians 1:18-20, Revelation 1:4-6, John 18:33-37 & Luke 22:49-51

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Prayer for Understanding Eternal Spirit, you flow through the ages from the pages of Scripture, transforming hearts with your love. Open our ears to the reading of your Word. Help us to receive love, grow in love and share love. We pray in the name of the king of love, Jesus. Amen.

Jesus is king. God’s kingdom has perfect love that binds all people, all of the cosmos, together in peace, joy, and love. The Apostle Paul wrote: **Colossians 1:18-20 MSG “Jesus was supreme in the beginning and—leading the resurrection parade—Jesus is supreme in the end. From beginning to end Jesus is there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is Jesus, so expansive, that everything of God finds its proper place in Jesus. All the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms—get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies.”**

How do you envision God’s kingdom of love? One of the experiences that has helped me envision the wonder of King Jesus’ love are mountaintop experiences with Leslie, Spencer, and Abigail. I am there with people I love, peering into the cosmos, stars shining from distant galaxies. Earth spins revealing our star that shines light on the landscape blanketed in clouds. I am aware of how small I am, and God knows everything about me and loves me completely. I belong and have a unique place that God has created just for me in this enormous cosmos. I savor love. I become aware of ways I grow in love of family, myself, others, and the cosmos. In relation to the enormity of the cosmos, my worries, stress, and anxiety fades. I realize that love will always grow ever grandeur. I become confident that in the future I will experience the joy of loving all people and being loved by all people. In awe, love permeates every fiber of my being.

John had a vision of the glory of God’s kingdom. **Revelation 1:4- 6 NLT “Grace and peace to you from the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come; from the sevenfold Spirit before God’s throne; and from Jesus Christ. Jesus is the faithful witness to these things, the first to rise from the dead, and the ruler of all the kings of the world. All glory to Jesus who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding his blood for us. Jesus has made us a Kingdom of priests for God. All glory and power to God forever and ever! Amen.”**

The gospel of John proclaims. **John 18:33-37 NLT “Then Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. “Are you the king of the Jews?” he asked him. Jesus replied, “Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?” “Am I a Jew?” Pilate retorted. “Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?” Jesus answered, “My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world.” Pilate said, “So you are a king?” Jesus responded, “You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true.”**

Jesus is our king. Pilate struggles to understand Jesus because he is unable to set aside his political glasses to see with his spiritual glasses. Crowds were drawn to Jesus because he reveals divine love and the coming Kingdom of God. If Pilate could have gotten past his political blinders, he would have been attracted to the divine love Jesus reveals. He would have glimpsed the coming Kingdom of God and seen Jesus as the king of love.

Jesus tells Pilate he is not a pretender to the throne. The social-political kingdoms of this world are built on violence and maintained by force. Jesus’ disciples are not fighting to keep him out of the clutches of the religious authorities who have brought him to Pilate. The reason is the realm of which Jesus is the highest member is not this broken world of fighting.

Traveling back in time Luke tells of the arrest of Jesus. **Luke 22:49-51 NLT “When the other disciples saw what was about to happen, they exclaimed, “Lord, should we fight? We brought the swords!” Peter struck at the high priest’s slave, slashing off his right ear. But Jesus said, “No more of this.” And he touched the man’s ear and healed him.”**

Forgoing force is a loving decision. Jesus has spent his entire life giving people ears to hear, he is not about to start taking them off now. The symbolic import is that the beginning of violence is the end of dialogue. That is why Peter’s sword severs the ear. Combatants can no longer hear one another. Ears have to be restored for dialogue to happen and for violence to end. Love flourishes when we listen to others and discover how to love them in the manner they want to be loved.

Jesus refuses the sword. Jesus honors our free will and is committed to the glory of love to attract everyone to God's kingdom. Jesus is committed to the purity of love to cleanse, heal, and unite us all together in God's kingdom. If Jesus belonged to this world, Jesus would advocate fighting to secure his safety. God's kingdom relies on love as its sole strategy and protection. God's love is more than enough to heal, resurrect, and unite everyone. Jesus brings the kingdom to us, grace, unconditional love freely given to all people. The truth is God's love is enough. The truth is we all need God's love. Throughout our lives, there are these moments of love when we recognize the truth that God's love is all we need and have ever wanted. The truth that God's love completes us and enables us to love. Love provides abundant life. At some point, each person will have a moment when they experience love and realize the truth that love is what they have been yearning for all along.

Pilate stubbornly clings to his narrow, distorted view of the world, a political view where there are those in power and those without, winners and losers, scarcity, there is not enough for everyone, so Pilate by force takes and protects his power, wealth, and status. Pilate stubbornly clings to the world where one needs to earn everything, plan everything, and control everything. Fighting for everything is exhausting and imprisons one to their ego, appetites, envy, and yearnings. This way of life is confined by fear, worry, and anxiety. Those fixated on the politics of the world often struggle to hear truth with any spiritual depth.

Those who are able to "let go" hear the attractive harmony of God's love. They gravitated to God's love. They discover how to receive and share love. They hear the truth of God's redeeming love, the gospel, the good news. They hear the truth that love will seamlessly fit the pieces of the universe—people and things, animals, and atoms together in vibrant harmony. This way of life soars on hope, a confident expectation that God's kingdom of love will be enjoyed by all.

Jesus never used violence. Jesus loved. Jesus used silence, questions, stories, and healings to create space for humanity to listen, to hear the truth of God's loving kingdom. If one does not hear the revelation of God's kingdom of love, Jesus did not, and does not, terrorize people with threats of worldly disasters or afterlife punishments. Jesus came to reveal grace to correct these Old Testament misconceptions. God is love. It is not possible for God to be love and to dole out torture, wrath, and misery. God continually loves.

We still have many people who can only see the world from a political perspective. Political people believe in a complex system of rewards that must be earned. Political people transfer their violent ways on God. Political-minded people warn that God will punish. Political people maneuver themselves into positions of power where they elevate themselves by putting others down. Some religious leaders are only able to see from a political perspective. They teach that you must do certain things to earn God's love, to be an insider, to be saved. They believe in a tiny God whose love has limited influence, their perception is that God's love is unable to attract, heal, redeem, resurrect, and perfect everyone.

Spiritual people hear that God's love is freely offered to all, that God will always keep loving everyone, patiently waiting for everyone to hear God's love. Spiritual people believe that God is sovereign, beyond time, more than capable of loving all people into completeness, perfection, and glory.

Many people are like Peter seeing from both views, at times more political and other times more spiritual. In today's scripture Peter was seeing from a political view so he used the violence of the sword. Jesus lovingly says to Peter, "No more of this." And Jesus touched the man's ear and healed him." Jesus always responds with love.

Most people have experienced rough and tumble discussions resulting in winners and losers. Jesus lovingly reveals the "and," the shared meaning, where the truth of God's kingdom of love unites.

God's love is a mirror that enables one to see the unknown territory of our true self, which is in the image of God, which is pure love. God's love enables us to see past our faults, regrets, deficiencies to our true self, an eternal loving soul. King Jesus enables us to see ourselves as royalty, to hear that our love is transforming ourselves, others, and the world, to hear that our love will always be celebrated, persevered and ever expanding in God's kingdom.

God's love enables us to see past the fear, hate, and mess of others to their wonderful love. God loves diversity. God created the world with vast variety. As we grow in love, we are able to love people who are more and more different from ourselves.

Growing up my world was small, a farm boy who only went to the Presbyterian Church. I grew to love Leslie, a Roman Catholic. I worshiped in the Roman Catholic church hearing love in their worship, enabling me to grow in love for people from different denominations. Leslie's co-worker invited us to temple where I experienced another facet of love enabling me to grow in love for people from different religions. There was a time when I was indifferent to homeless people. I gave money to the organizations that provide housing. I believed everyone should have a home. Then I volunteered as a tutor at a homeless shelter and listened to the stories of homeless people growing my love for them. I traveled to Africa and worshiped there, inspired by their passionate worship. My love grew as I realized there are many wonderful ways to worship. I could go on and on how God is loving me into a more loving person.

True love enables us to love when someone does things that annoy us. True love enables us to love when we are grieving and hurting. True love enables us to love even when we stubbornly disagree. True love enables us to love when we do not feel like loving. True love enables us to believe that all, people and things, animals and atoms will enjoy vibrant harmony as we joyfully dance in the resurrection parade led by our King Jesus. True love enables us to love everyone, love the cosmos and love in every situation.

King Jesus lovingly invites us to listen to each other. Love grows when we understand another's story. The truth is we are all beloved children of God, we are all siblings, royalty, soon to be inhabitants of God's eternal Kingdom. On earth, each of us, all of us, has the opportunity to grow in love for all people, we have the opportunity to bring more of God's kingdom to earth.

I hope you will be able to spend thanksgiving with people you love. I hope you will make time to savor love, share love and be grateful for love. Amen

** Aspects of this sermon inspired by John Shea*