

Sunday, November 21, 2021

Christ the King/Lectionary 34, year B

Introduction

Even after Israel had experienced the vagaries of kings, the people still longed for a true king to set things right. He would have the king's title of Anointed One (Messiah); he would be the "one like a human being" (Son of Man) given dominion in Daniel's vision. Jesus is given these titles, even though he is nothing like an earthly king. His authority comes from the truth which he bears witness, and those who recognize the truth voluntarily listen to him. We look forward to the day he is given dominion, knowing his victory will be the nonviolent victory of love.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and ever-living God, you anointed your beloved Son, whom you anointed to be priest forever and king of all creation. Grant that all the people of the earth, now divided by the power of sin, may be united by the glorious and gentle rule of your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. Quiet our hearts and minds as we study your Word today so that we can hear what you have to say to us. In Jesus name. Amen.

First Reading: Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

To the community for whom this passage was written, it seemed as though the oppression they were experiencing would never end. Daniel's message is: It shall end. The Ancient One, who is judge, will call all nations to account and will give dominion to "one like a human being," the Messiah.

Verse by verse

vs9 As I watched, thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One took his throne, his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire.

This judgment scene is similar to one that was seen by the apostle John (Revelation 1:14,15) The Ancient One is almighty God, who assigns power to kingdoms and who will himself judge those kingdoms in the end.

vs10 A stream of fire issued and flowed out from his presence. A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.

The book of Revelation records a similar picture of God with angels surrounding his throne. John recorded that there were "thousands of millions" (Revelation 5:11,12) In other words too many angels to count surround God's throne and minister to him. Created by God, angels are spiritual beings who help carry out his work on earth.

Vs 13 As I watched in the night visions, I saw one “like a human being” coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him.

Vs 14. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.

13 & 14 This one “like a son of man” is the Messiah. Jesus used this verse to refer to himself (Matthew 26:64; Luke 21:27; John 1:51). The clouds of heaven portray the Son of Man as divine; throughout the Bible, clouds represent his majesty and awesome presence. God’s glory appeared in a cloud in Exodus 16:10 and 19:9 at the giving of the law at Sinai. Revelation also records Christ coming with the clouds of heaven (Revelation 1:7) Now the Son of Man is given dominion and glory and kingship over those who were given dominion over the earth’s living beings in the creation.

My footnotes come from a combination of the Life Application Study Bible New living translation - second Edition and the Sermon Writer.

The thousands and millions attending God are not always referred to as angels like in the New Living translation

Theology: The Book of Daniel centers around the profound truth of God’s sovereignty. We can find our security in his everlasting dominion that cannot be destroyed.

Theme: God’s unchanging and almighty nature. His creation reminds us of his great power

Psalm: Psalm 93

The Lord is king, robed in majesty; the Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength. The Lord made the world so sure that it cannot be moved.

Ever since the world began, your throne has been established; you are from everlasting.

The waters have lifted up, O Lord, the waters have lifted up their voice; The waters have lifted up their pounding waves.

Mightier than the sound of many waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea, mightier is the Lord who dwells on high.

Your testimonies are very sure.

and holiness befits your house, O Lord, forever and forevermore.

Sunday, November 21, 2021
Christ the King/Lectionary 34, year B
Second Reading: Revelation 1:4b-8

The book of Revelation begins by celebrating the Almighty God, who spans all of time. Similarly, Jesus is celebrated as the firstborn from the dead who rules over the world's rulers. He is the one whose return we eagerly await.

Verse by verse

Vs 4b. _Grace to you and peace from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,

Grace. Its use in the New Testament has roots in the Hebrew word *hesed*, used in the Old Testament to speak of God's Lovingkindness, mercy, and faithfulness.

Greeks used the word *charis*. Christian grace is the gift of salvation by God to all who accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ. God, the benefactor. we the beneficiaries, who depend on his grace.

Peace. *Shalom* in Hebrew. *Eirene* in Greek. Peace suggests, not the absence of violence, but the well-being that is derived from a deep relationship with God- the kind of wholeness that comes from having the image of God, once shattered by sin, restored in the believer.

Scholars are divided on the point of the seven spirits being the Holy Spirit. Throughout Revelation seven is used to symbolize completeness and perfection.

Vs 5. and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Jesus, faithful witness, who knows God because he was "in the beginning with God" (John 1:2) **First born of the dead**. Others had risen from the dead-people whom the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles brought back to life during their ministries- but later those people died again. Jesus was the first who rose from the dead in an imperishable body never to die again. **And the ruler of the kings of the earth**. Jesus reigns for eternity, is eternal, and divine. The day will come when all earthly kings will be forced to acknowledge his preeminence.

Vs 5b, To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, vs 6 and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen

1 Peter 2:9 We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.

Jesus is portrayed as the all-powerful King, victorious in battle, glorious in peace. He is not just a humble earthly teacher, he is the Glorious God. When you read John's description of the vision, keep in mind that his words are truth from the King of kings.

Vs 7, Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen.

John is announcing the return of Jesus to earth. Jesus' second coming will be visible and victorious. All people will see him arrive and they will know it is Jesus. When he comes, he will conquer evil and judge all people according to their deeds. Those who pierced him could refer to the Roman soldiers who pierced his side as he hung on the cross or to Jews who were responsible for his death.

Look or behold, alerts us to something important about to happen. A Roman soldier pierced Jesus' side initially, but each of us pierces his side when we live unfaithfully. The Greek word (nai) and the Hebrew (amen) stress the importance of what has been said. Verse 7 begins and ends with words that emphasize the importance of its message.

Vs 8, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.

The one speaking here is "the Lord God" God the Father. Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. God is saying, "I am A to Z- first and last- beginning and the end." Alpha and Omega represent completeness. Almighty. The word pantokrator combines two Greek words, (pan) which means all and (kratos) which means power or strength. We are to honor the one who is the beginning and end of all existence, wisdom and power.

Theology: As we read the book of Revelation, we marvel with John at the wondrous panorama of God's revealed plan. We listen as Christ warns the churches, and root out any of our sin that blocks our relationship with him. We are full of hope, knowing that God is in control, Christ's victory is assured, and all who trust him will be saved.

Sunday, November 21, 2021
Christ the King/Lectionary 34, Year B

Gospel: John 18:33-37

In John's gospel, the story of Jesus and Pilate presents two different ways of exercising power: through force or with love.

Verse by verse

Vs 33a and b. "Pilate therefore entered again into the Praetorium" "Are you the Kind of the Jews?" Pilate has only one legitimate concern, and that is whether Jesus poses a threat to Rome. If Jesus is assuming the role of king, that is treason-punishable by death. The irony is that Jesus is, indeed, a king, but one who poses no threat to Rome.

Vs 34 "Do you say this by your self, or did others tell you about me?" Jesus' question makes it clear that he understands the behind-the-scenes politics-that others have, indeed, told Pilate about him-that Jesus' enemies have enlisted Pilate to do their dirty work-that Pilate, presumably the most powerful man in Judea, has allowed himself to become a lackey to their interests.

Vs 35a "Pilate answered, "I'm not a Jew, am I?"
Pilate has little respect for the Jewish people, so his question has a scornful tone.

Vs 35b "Your own nation and chief priests delivered you to me. What have you done?"
Pilate does not know why the Jewish leaders want to kill Jesus, but he understands that there is more here than meets the eye. He wants to expose the hidden agenda, so he asks Jesus to explain what is going on.

Vs 36a "My kingdom is not of this world"
Jesus informs that he is a king, but assures Pilate that Rome has no reason to fear him. Jesus seeks, not a cosmos kingdom, but a Godly kingdom. Jesus' interest is not in assuming political kingship, but instead desires that people will enthrone him in their hearts-just as the Father will soon enthrone him in heaven.

Vs 36b "If my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would fight, that I wouldn't be delivered to the Jews"
Jesus' band of disciples is small, but many people are drawn to him. They are unhappy with the Roman occupation, and hope for a leader who will organize them.

Vs 36c “But my kingdom is not from here.”

Like Jesus, the church today has much moral authority but little cosmos authority-to ally itself with cosmos power. When it has done that, it has usually lost moral authority-has found it impossible to hold both moral and cosmos authority simultaneously. In most places where the church has held substantial cosmos power historically, the church is marginal or dead today. The church does best when emulating the Son of Man. Just as Jesus’ power was in the cross, so the church’s most effective witness is in service and sacrifice to people in need.

Vs 37 Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”

Pilate’s question probes the possibility that Jesus might be a political threat—invites Jesus to reassure him one more time that he is not. The prologue to this Gospel says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh, and lived among us. We saw his glory, such glory as of the one and only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth”. Jesus was born of a woman, but the greater reality is that he comes from God. The sheep will not listen to a stranger, because strangers are not trustworthy. They listen for the shepherd’s voice, because the shepherd has words of truth and life. Those who listen to Jesus’ voice are his disciples.

The above Gospel section is taken entirely from the Sermon Writer

Theology: He spoke, and galaxies whirled into place, stars burned the heavens, and planets began orbiting their suns — words of awesome, unlimited, unleashed power. He spoke again, and the waters and lands were filled with plants and creatures, running, swimming, growing, and multiplying — words animating, breathing, pulsing life. Again he spoke, and man and woman were formed, thinking, speaking, and loving — words of personal and creative glory. Eternal, infinite, unlimited—he was, is, and always will be the Maker and Lord of all that exists.

And then he came in the flesh to a speck in the universe called planet Earth. The mighty Creator became part of the creation, limited by time and space and susceptible to aging, sickness, and death. But love propelled him, and so he came to rescue and save those who were lost and to give them the gift of eternity. He is the Word; he is Jesus, the Messiah.

It is this truth that the apostle John brings to us in this book. John’s Gospel is not a life of Christ; it is a powerful argument for the incarnation, a conclusive demonstration that Jesus was, and is, the very heaven-sent Son of God and the only source of eternal life.

Taken from the introduction of John’s Gospel in the “New Living translation”
Second Edition