

"Christ the King or Doom Sunday"

Do you notice anything different this morning? No, I'm not talking about my mustache. Although I was flattered this week when at the vestry meeting I looked up to see almost everyone with a ~~smile~~ on her or his face. What is different? Nope, it's not a fun new haircut that Evan is sporting. The difference this morning is the color white (point to ~~the~~ stole and altar hanging and other hanging). Of course, you are all good Episcopians so you noticed it immediately.

For the past twenty-six (26) Sundays we have been in the long green season after Pentecost. While I am happy to see a new color, it has been a remarkable season of growth St. John's

has witnessed God's beautiful work in the world for the past six and half months. We have had front row seats to see Christ sharing the Good News in our worship, in projects like Banks-Cuddell tutoring, the Back pack program, the Couri. Garden, Theology on Tap, EfM, Christian Ed classes, and the Simply Divine Bake Sale. Yes, I'm happy to see the color green put back in the sacristy drawer, but what a marvelous season of growth it has marked for the past half year!

Today we ~~pause briefly~~ celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, which is why we have brought out the white. Christ the King sounds like it is some ancient holy day celebrated by the early Church, as if they were saying to the Roman Empire we do

not bow to any earthly ruler. Yet, this liturgical (church) celebration ~~actually only~~ started only 88 years ago, although its origins are in Rome. In the years following what was to be later known as World War I Pope Pius XI began to notice in the church a rise of secularism, ripping the church from state institutions, and nationalism, a glorification of one's nation/national identity. As he saw this focus shifting away from the Church Catholic he wanted a way of refocusing members on who was really running the show... Christ Jesus. So being the top-down institution that it is the Pope began a celebration of Christ the King Sunday. All this sounds well and good for those monarchies in Europe and elsewhere, but what about us?

Almost 70 years later out in a country that was founded to get away from a King does this celebration even make any sense?

Today is not only Christ the King Sunday, it is also the last Sunday of our Liturgical Year. (While most department stores already are fully in Christmas we haven't even gotten to the season that precedes it). Up until 1983 our sisters and brothers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sweden called to day DOOM SUNDAY!!! It is the END OF THE YEAR, so they wanted to celebrate and confront the END OF DAYS.

We as Americans are certainly more well aware of this, ~~the stuff~~ ~~other by know is this all to see and~~ I am not immune to this fascination with the end. I almost in-pend up and down when

I come out our toll series this year on Wed. nights would be about death. ~~But~~ ^{Yet} I ~~mostly~~ blame this excitement on zombies, yes that's right... I said zombies!

~~When~~ Looking around our culture there are apps that motivate people to run by counting up with elaborate zombie scenarios, training drills that called for Navy Seals to isolate a "zombie like threat," and of course there are TV shows and movies. My favorite is the Walking Dead. It is very gross and sometimes horrifying*, but it has got me thinking what will I do in the END or when a horrible infection breaks out? What will it be like?

* Describe Walking Dead a bit or go to thewalkingdead.com
Also point out our own fears of the END

well maybe the end will be about scary things like zombies or vampires or werewolves, but if we look to today's gospel we have a front row seat for what God envisions as the end.

~~The leader's scoff at Jesus is~~
~~crucial~~. Jesus is crucified between two criminals and among many in power who look on scoffing at him, "He saved others ^{let} ~~himself~~ save himself if he is the Messiah." Soldiers mocked him, "If you are the King of the Jews save yourself." And one of the criminals hanging on his own torture device asked, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"¹¹

All of them^{the outsiders} (and the disciples I might add) had their own vision of what the end of Jesus' life would be like. Their mockery

or satirical thought never saw the Messiah and would come to overthrow Rome, the powers that be. The disciples longed for a violent toppling of the ruling class that they might be put in power.

Yet this view of the end looks different, different from cycles of violence, different from zombies, different from fire and brimstone (the word through whom all things were made, as John's Gospel reminds us) the Messiah who came to save all of creation was not coming to perpetuate more of the same earthly reigns of the past. Christ Jesus, instead introduced something new in the end.

Instead of cursing from the cross Christ called out, "Father forgive them for they know

not what they do. Passion instead
of punishment, Forgiveness instead
of fighting, Loving instead of
loathing. God incarnate showed
us what we are to be aiming
for in our END to let go of
revenge and turn instead towards
embracing those who hate us.

There was one who recognized
in that final moment what was
happening. Another criminal saw
Jesus' innocence ~~and justice~~
~~and~~ even while he hung
beside him, and crying out he
said "Jesus, remember me when
you come into your Kingdom."
This is all we can ask as we
face our lives and our ends.
Jesus, put us back together
(re-member) us as you come
into your Kingdom.

As we turn from the long
season after Pentecost into

our new ~~season~~ year we see
both the END and the Beginning.
We are a cyclical people and
while we have HOPE in God's
redeeming POWER of the Resurrection.
Right now ~~let~~ ^{we} look to the
cross and our ~~past~~ ^{Savior}, the
Christ, ~~the only one worthy~~
~~of being called King, and the~~
~~one willing to not a King, but~~
our God, who even in the
pain of his passion forgave
his torturers. ~~Remember~~
Jesus remember us as you
come into your Kingdom.