

Year C  
Feast of Christ the King  
Jeremiah 23:1-6  
Canticle 16 (Luke 1:68-79)  
Colossians 1:11-20  
Luke 23:33-43

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Good morning, and welcome to Carter Hall on this Feast of Christ the King! I'm grateful that you made the commitment to being here, to worship in this unfamiliar place. I'm also grateful that Natalie and Langdon were able to make arrangements for us to worship here, where it is *warm and cozy*. Thank you! And thank you to the members of the vestry who made sure that people knew about the location change, and who set everything up while I was away.

You might remember that Macon and I have been at the annual diocesan convention for the last three days. There the clergy and delegates heard annual reports, we elected leaders, we voted on resolutions, and we passed a diocesan budget. A lot of this was quickly done by voice vote (yea or nay), and a lot of it was unanimous. What needed balloting was efficiently done online. It was seamless. Bishop Eugene Sutton of the Diocese of Maryland gave a keynote address on the reparations work that their diocese has been doing, to help repair the history of slavery and racism in Maryland. He stressed that this work is not about "throwing money at the problem," but is about relationship-building, and building up what has been torn down by racism. His talk was inspiring, and he encouraged us in our work of improving race relations here in the Diocese of Virginia.

Another conversation about relationships had to do with the resolution on the Promotion of Civil Discourse. In view of the way public discourse has deteriorated in recent years, we were encouraged to follow Jesus' example in communicating with one another with respect and love. The resolution calls on elected officials, candidates for all offices, and Episcopalians, in particular, to publicly repudiate hate speech and to engage in civil discourse. It also encourages Episcopalians and parishes to make use of the Civil Discourse Curriculum developed by The Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations. This is a five-session class that I'm going to look into facilitating for us. Being able to talk about difficult subjects in a helpful, civil way is something everyone can benefit from.

Our diocesan office has also committed to reaching zero net carbon emissions from their operations by the year 2030. They urge our congregations to do the same. There are many ways that we can work toward doing this, including planting trees here on the property. We'll talk about this initiative later, as well.

One of the lovely moments of the convention was the announcement that Our Saviour parish in Montpelier obtained full church status this year. There was a delegation from Our Saviour that processed with their banner, and then told their story. Apparently, they

were established as a mission church in 1882, by the Episcopal Church in China! Four years ago they were finally able to call a full-time rector who worked with them to grow their membership. Now they are no longer a mission church. Their situation reminded me that WE are also growing here at Christ Church, and I was both happy for them, and for us.

So, today is the Feast of Christ the King—it is one of the newest feast days on the liturgical calendar. Yes, we have always hailed Jesus Christ as our King, but it wasn't until 1925 that Pope Pius XI instituted this feast day, in order to counteract what he saw as the rampant moral and ethical decline in the world's leadership. Around the world at that time he saw fascism, totalitarianism, racism, militarism, secularism and violence. Pius said this kind of rulership was in direct contradiction to what Jesus called leaders to be. So he held Jesus up on this day to illustrate what true kingship should look like—what true leadership should be.

Today, unfortunately, we see much the same sort of thing as Pius saw in the 1920s. Certainly we are an even more secular world now than in the days before World War II. We also see totalitarianism and violence everywhere, even in our own country. The recent shooting at UVA is just the latest example. It seems that, today more than ever before, we need the example of Christ the King.

Today's passage from Jeremiah is explicit about the kind of unacceptable leaders that the Jews had then, whom he compares to bad shepherds. "It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them." As a result, God says he will "gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands...and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing." God will give them a King who will "deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land."

Canticle 16 is the Song of Zechariah, who was the father of John the Baptist. Zechariah sings about his son John, who will "be called the prophet of the Most High,/ for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,/ To give his people knowledge of salvation/ by the forgiveness of their sins." To remind us that Jesus was of royal lineage, Zechariah tells that Jesus was "born of the house of his servant David." Jesus, this new King, will "shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,/ and...guide our feet into the way of peace."

Paul reminds us, in his letter to the Colossians, that God gave us Jesus, and "in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross." Then we see Jesus on that very cross in Luke's gospel this morning. To see the King of Heaven and earth hanging from a cross, gasping out his life, might seem incongruous. And it is. But Jesus is like no other King. Only he can overcome death through his resurrection. Only he can forgive our sins through his

sacrifice. Only he can say, as he said to the repentant thief, “today you shall be with me in paradise.”

As we go into this new week after our worship service, let’s refocus on Jesus Christ the King, and his example of forgiveness and love. As Americans we don’t have an earthly king, but as Christians we serve a heavenly one. If every day we can refocus on Christ the King, and his example of civil discourse, and respect for every person refocus on his love for the world that he created, refocus on his forgiveness, on his justice, and love, then we will be his true and faithful subjects.  
Amen.

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