

NOVEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup>, 2019  
SPRINGFIELD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
CHRIST THE KING  
10:30 AM

In the Fold

## I. What a King Should Be

In the prophecy that Jeremiah shares, he likens the image of God to a shepherd, a familiar and comforting metaphor, particularly to an agrarian culture. The shepherd is one who is gentle with the sheep, but also pulls them back in with the hook of his shepherd's crook.

It is particularly interesting that this is the reading we come to as we celebrate 'Christ the King' Sunday, where emphasis is placed on the kingship of Christ and his power and reign. Christ is not anything like the Kings of the culture of Jeremiah's context, or his own context, or even ours today. When we think of Kings, we think of royal thrones, polite protocols, security detail, fancy and extravagant images. The prophecies we find in Scripture all point to a different kind of King, and we find our example in Jesus Christ.

## II. A Favorite Story

As I was thinking about this Sunday, and what it means to be a King and a child of the one Sovereign King, I remembered a story from a Dr. Quinn Medicine Woman episode, where one of the teachers were treating the children poorly. The reverend in the show, on the Sunday morning, puts his sermon down and shares this story,

He says, “ I’m gonna tell you a story. This is a story that my grandma told me a long time ago.

Once there was a shabby town where all the people were unhappy, poor, and ignorant. And one day, a King came to visit, and he told them that he had secretly switched a baby in the town with his own. Now after the king left, the people were afraid, they were worried that when the king returned again, that he would punish them if the royal child was unhappy. But since they had no idea which baby it was, the whole town treated each child as if each child were royalty. Many years later the king did return, by then the children were grown up and the children had children of their own. The town was very different. There were

libraries, schools, and hospitals and churches. All the families were hard working and happy. You see, these grown up children had no idea, they had not heard the story of the king, they did not know a prince or princess was among them. They were productive, creative, happy and kind simply because they had been loved and educated and protected – treated as if each child were royalty.

An old woman on her death bed, she asked the king, “I know, my wonderful grown up daughter is the princess, isn’t she?” And the King told her, “they are all one.”

This is one of the Hallmark moments that always makes my eyes water. I think it resonates so deeply because this is what the Kingdom on Earth should look like. Each person protected, loved, and educated – simply based upon the fact that they are children of God – no qualifications apply. Grace is simply grace, love is simply love, and all people are treated equally. Maybe we need to take this story from the reverend, maybe our world would be a more productive, kind, creative, and happy place if we actually treated one another as if we were all children of Christ the King.

### III. A World Hard to Imagine

It's a world that is hard to imagine, especially when our world swirls with violence, oppression, and inequality. Perhaps we would all be right in saying that we will not see this view of the Kingdom in our lifetime, but nevertheless we are called to picture it and act upon it.

One of my favourite attributes of Christ is that for a majority of his life and ministry, he was gentle, and kind – he invited the stranger in, he sat with sinners, and he laid hands upon people whom we might not dare to touch. And yet, if you look closely at our Gospels, do not be dismayed – Jesus may have laid down his life, but he was not docile, he was not to be tread upon. When the hard questions came, he answered them, even if it was in confusing parable.

You see, the Shepherd, the Christ the King – he takes care of his flock, he reigns us in, and holds us in abundant love. But may we also not forget the Christ that turned tables, that would not pander to the word of Roman elites, and did not move from his position in his love of righteousness. You see, our shepherd is

gentle, but our Shepherd, when we wander in our ways, when we have gone astray, you better bet that that crook will come out and pull you back in from the Cliffside. Christ our King is both gentle and stern and both loving and firm.

And if we proclaim Christ as King, then we also proclaim that we are children of the King. So even if the world does not seem like it is anywhere near the Gospel Kingdom, I encourage you to set your foot down and do not be kept silent. As you go from this place, may you treat each person you encounter as a child of Christ. Again, no qualifications, no excuses, no prerequisites.

The person you encounter in the aisle at the supermarket – they are a child of God. The person you find on the street – they are a child of God. The person that you find completely irritating and drives you nuts – sorry, they are also a child of God.

By treating people as children of God, you are not allowing their sin, you are not in any shape or form, saying that what they do is wrong or right. Because frankly, you don't have that kind of power – only God does, and the judgment is not for us to proclaim. And the good news there too, is that your sin is your own, it is not mine, it is not ours to condemn. The children of

God, the children of the King, will always be sinners and saints, each beloved, each made to be more, each crafted with care and love, each meant to belong.

#### IV.

So go from this place, doing what is difficult, doing what stretches you and a moves you and profoundly encourages you as well – encounter the stranger as you would encounter a child of the King. There is a commission, a call, a charge we find in the letter to the Thessalonians – let it be your charge today:

Go out into the world in peace.

Have courage.

Hold onto what is good.

Return no one evil for evil.

Strengthen the faint-hearted.

Support the weak.

Help the suffering.

Honor all persons.

Honor all creation.

Love and serve the Lord,

rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And may the love of God,

the Light of Christ,

and the power and communion of that Spirit

be with us all.

Go in peace. Amen."