

## Reign of Christ Sunday

John 18: 27-37

November 25, 2012

So, here we are at the table again. There's something about sitting together at a table that calls for a story.

That's pretty primal in us. Something in us needs this. Tell us where we come from; tell us to whom we belong, the table seems to say.

Very well – pull up a chair. And let's see what happens.

So here we are at the table. And here we are, at the end of another church year. Unlike the secular year, January to December, the church year begins with Advent and ends ...right here – Reign of Christ. Through this next year we'll begin by reading of the lead-up to Christmas, then his birth, then his teachings, his life, moving then into the conflict, the arrest, crucifixion....then the Res...and then, for a good long time that takes us through the summer, his Risen presence among us through the Spirit. And it all comes to a climax

here....

Reign of Christ.

Everything we've heard him say, seen him do, his risen presence and his call to follow....all comes together in a feast where we say he IS king.

It's kind of....New Year's eve, church style.

And here we are, end of November, making promises to ourselves once again, resolutions, that we will move toward Christmas this year with integrity, and mindfulness, and grace.

Amen. Let it be so.

Reign of Christ Sunday. He IS king. Political and gender issues aside...we could talk about those all day – and we should but not today.

He IS King. The one who deserves and invites our ultimate loyalty.

Because this is how human beings ARE – if Jesus isn't king, someone else will be

And you want to be careful. Deliberate. Aware. Intentional about who or what that might be.

So...we end the year with a feast, and we call it Reign of Christ. And here we are, with our faces pressed up against the promise of his ultimate triumph.

And here's the final vision of the one whose glorious reign we celebrate.

28-38

Some kind of king, eh?

Did you know that this exchange between Pilate and Jesus is the oldest surviving piece of NT papyrus? Dated Egypt 125 CE (that has nothing to do with the sermon but I find that interesting.)

Look at them. Jesus and Pilate. Look at them there.

How is it that THIS shows us Jesus as king?

It's beautifully written, this conversation. Compelling....full of irony, a little funny in a sad sort of way.

Look at them.

There's Pilate – he's a man with power. He has the power of life and death over Jesus. He can say whether he lives or dies.

And it seems....well...that power doesn't seem to be carried very well by Pilate right at the moment. It seems heavy on his Roman shoulders, unbalanced, causing him to be the same.

You know that little king in the comic strip The Wizard of Id? He reminds me a little of him. Running back and forth from Jesus to the crowd, back to Jesus, back to the crowd....

Unclear, unsure,

I picture him a little depressed, headachy and with a growing sense of panic. The job, with all its power, is not what he had hoped for.

There's something going on here he doesn't understand ..something in him senses it's bigger than it appears....

And he just wants this little Jew to go away.

Look at him. Not at home in the job, or in his own skin. And in the end, it's clear he has no power at all.

Now...look at Jesus. Not the king we expected, is he? To be sure.

Although.....

We've been following him for a long time now. We've listened to him teaching, we've seen how he treats people, watched him as he gathers to himself as a hen her chicks ...gathers to himself a community of openness

The like of which had only ever been dreamed of....prophesied, longed for and lamented.

He broods over the face of the chaos, and creates in himself a community or radical inclusiveness and welcome...of open table

fellowship unheard of in the world of that day

Or this come to think of it

That files in the face of the power that Pilate represents.

Are you king of the Jews?

He wants an answer. Yes. Or No. Not a speech, not some spooky, Jewy, poetic metaphor. He has a form to fill out. A box to tick off. Yes or no. Are you the king of the Jews??

Jesus answers – with essentially the same question he asked his disciples at Caesarea Phillipi....what are others saying about me and who do you say I am

Patient for the moment, Pilate tries another angle.

What have you done?

What have you done? Yea – he's going to need a bigger scroll for that one. Where do you start? It would take many books to answer that question, wouldn't it?

Pilate's questions seem to me to be scattered, and frantic.

Like....like skipping a stone on water....hitting now here, now there, but just the surface. No depth.

Jesus' answers

The two are speaking on completely different planes

Missing one another

But Jesus' answers go deep.

Each of his responses, though not grasped by Pilate, each response is like a solid rock. His words are solid. They sink deep.

PLUNK. Creating ripples that spread.

You can feel those ripples, can't you? Feel them in the core of your being....

I have come to testify to the truth, he says. I have come to testify to the truth.

And Pilate...who has missed those ripples completely

His insides shrouded by his own power

And the poverty of the imagination of his heart

And the world that named and claimed him

Pilate, shrouded by his own world, cannot feel the ripples of truth that are streaming from this man. His calmness, his groundedness, his gentle strength,

That would have, had Pilate been open to them, encircled him too.

Look at them! Two kings.

There is no question where the true power lies.

And the ripples turn to waves, flowing, streaming from the man who has come to testify to the truth

And those waves will rock and ultimately capsize the principalities and powers of this present twisted structures based on violence and money

Will bring down the mighty from their thrones

And buoy up those of low degree

Look at him! Just standing there he offers a new world. A new order. A compelling, living vision of how it can be and how in the end it really is

Once the layers have been peeled away. A new world is possible and we can feel its breath, hot and sweet on the back of our necks right now

And you look at Pilate – see the worry on his face, the stiff pathetic attempt to control what he does not understand.. You look at him and his world. You look back to Jesus. Jesus says “I’m not FROM that world. I’m from another world. Want to see it?

And we do. We do see it as we look at him and....

As we sit together at this table

HIS table

We know in some deep, rippling part of ourselves

That this is truth, and we are home.