

Reign of Christ Sunday is a marker for the end of the liturgical year. It is a way of saying we conclude a year's worth of worship by claiming again whose we are. The emphasis this week is in the middle – "of Jesus Christ." That is the kind of disciple that we are. We aren't disciples of our own wisdom; we aren't disciples following the winds of this world. We are disciples of Jesus Christ.

Reign of Christ Sunday or Christ the King Sunday as originally instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925 was to celebrate the sovereignty of Christ as a way of combating the destructive forces of this age. We have only to mention the names of Hitler and Mussolini; and then look out to our world today and see that those same dark clouds continue to swirl and threaten our world. Thus, Reign of Christ Sunday, remains a worthwhile day; to ponder how we respond to Christ's reign in our lives.

Our text from Revelation celebrates the sovereignty of Christ. It begins by saying, "**Grace to you and peace from him**

**who is and who was and who is to come.**" We come together celebrating the God of past, present, and future, knowing that God holds all these things in His hands.

Jesus is the ruler of the kings of earth, it states, the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 17:14 and "The Messiah").

**"To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father"** Christ is worthy of praise and honor because of what he has done for us through his life, death, and resurrection.

**"I am the Alpha and the Omega."** Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and Omega is the last letter of the Greek alphabet. Christ is complete. Christ is our beginning and end, our all and all.

It reminds us of God's answer to Moses. **"If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has**

**sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God answers, "I AM WHO I AM."** Isaiah puts it this way, **"I, the Lord, am first, and will be with the last."** (Isa. 41:4)

Reign of Christ is a difficult theme for us to reflect on because we live in a democracy, we have only a constitutional King or Queen, not one who has all and final authority. We have trouble imagining what monarchy might mean in our context, even if we sing the hymns with gusto. So, the inconsistencies abound. And to top it all off, our lectionary returns us to the story we heard months ago, on Good Friday, the story of Jesus' passion according to John.

Our gospel allows us to focus for a day on an episode of the story that probably typically gets lost in the sweep of the overall story, on Good Friday. Let's take this opportunity to pause and reflect on a particular incident from a different perspective and perhaps see it with new eyes; and how it might hold meaning for us today.

Turning to our gospel passage, specifically v.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."**

Sometimes it is difficult to hear Jesus amidst all the noise of daily living. Think about it. As I write this message, I can hear all household noises (hot water tank, heating system, music on the radio downstairs), the outside sounds (people, cars, airplanes) and that's only the noise I hear. So often, our own issues of day, family issues, financial issues create so much interference that we effectively don't hear much at all. Think about it, how much of a distraction (albeit a necessary one) has COVID-19 been in our lives for the past year and more; and its distraction continues with us still.

So, how do we listen to the voice of Jesus in our noisy world, in our distracted state; especially right as we are torn between Christmas season (of this world) and Advent season (of the spiritual world)? Reign of Christ Sunday is the last stop in our current church year, this week is the only pause before we race into next year, while we simultaneously apply the brakes to experience Advent before slamming full on into that most silent, holy night of the year. Whew! Sometimes it makes me weary just thinking about the next few weeks.

Pilate knew a thing or two about weariness (and noise!) in the reading from John's gospel today. One moment he is talking with Jesus and trying to make sense of this indelicate situation that's been foisted upon him, and the next minute he's trying to quell the agitated crowds and the determined religious leaders. Torn between the noise of world and empire and the quiet voice of an unlikely king, Pilate eventually capitulates to the louder crowd and washes his hands of the dilemma.

Is it much different for us? How tempting it is to give in to the loud call of our hectic, noisy world with its conflicting messages and competing claims. Our consumer culture tells us that we need so much, that if we wear this or buy these or drive that we will be happy forever, or until we get home — whichever comes first. We learn that we are less than, not good enough, too homely, too poor, always reaching for the brass ring or next rung on the ladder to an illusion of success.

All the while, Jesus softly and **clearly testifies to the truth and invites us to listen and follow.** Our uncommon king has no need to compete with the loud and stifling messages of the world because what he offers is life and truth and hope for all time—in all times. Maybe now is the right time to challenge one another; and ourselves to enter the season of Advent with open ears, expectant hearts, and a quiet space each day.

Let's put it on our calendars, in our day timers, on our phones, our digital devices. Morning, afternoon or evening it doesn't matter. Let's schedule a quiet time each day, to listen and hear His voice and re-commit ourselves to following the truth.

Listen. Can you hear him? The Truth speaks to you; best of all, the Truth loves you like no other. Let us commit to following the truth.

Amen. May it be so.