

Christ the King Yr C, 20/11/2022  
Ps 46:8-11; Col 1:13-14, 19-20; Lk 23:32-34  
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“The realm of non-violence, peace and forgiveness”

What should the worldly wise do with an unkingly king? With an unkingly king who refuses to take authority over armies; who will not grant cabinet posts to cronies; who will not, even for one day, live in a palace; who refuses to hate enemies or plot their downfall; who mixes in common crowds without any sense of royal dignity; who won't have a bodyguard or wear a safety vest; who refuses to play political games to increase his power; who will not dress in gilded gowns, or wear a jewelled crown?

What would the worldly wise do with such an unkingly king? Get rid of him quickly. Very quickly! Dispose of him before he ruins the fabric of our macho society! If necessary kill the fool. Publicly humiliate him and then execute him.

Christ's kingliness is defined by that lonely, suffering figure dying on a cross, naked and forsaken, mocked by his enemies, yet even in his last hours forgiving his murderers comforting a criminal who is dying at his side.

The realm of Jesus is one of non-violence, peace and forgiveness. The early Christians were non-violent, they worshipped and served Jesus, their non-violent king.

Listen to some restrictions contained in a document called “The Apostolic Tradition” written around the period of 200 AD., for those asking for baptism.

*If a [person] is a charioteer, a wrestler, or attends wrestling matches, let him either give it up or be sent away. If [they are] a gladiator or teaches gladiators to fight, or [are] a beast fighter, or [they are] an official who organises gladiatorial games, let [them] give it up or be sent away. If [they are] a soldier in position of authority [they are] not allowed to impose a death sentence; if [they are] ordered to do so, let [them] not carry out the order..... if [they do] not accept this rule, let [them] be sent away. A [person] who is a civil magistrate with the power of the sword, one who wears the purple, must either give up [their] position or be sent away. Believers or candidates who wish to enlist as soldiers are to be sent away, because they show contempt for God.*

Those early Christians worshipped a non-violent King; a Son of God who would not use physical power against another but chose the way of humility and mercy. To be a citizen of

Christ's new kingdom meant to be a non-violent person in the midst of an extremely violent society.<sup>1</sup>

In Psalm 46:8-11; Colossians 1:13-14, 19-20; and Luke 23:32-34; we are given a picture of God's non-violent, peaceful, and forgiving kingdom. Notice in verse nine of our psalm this vision of a non-violent kingdom. Here is how *The Message* puts it: "Attention all! See the marvels of GOD! He plants flowers and trees all over the earth, bans war from pole to pole, breaks all the weapons across his knee." The REB renders it like this: "Come, see what the LORD has done, the astounding deeds he has wrought on earth; in every part of the wide world he puts an end to war: he breaks the bow, he snaps the spear, he burns the shields in the fire." In the midst of a violent world, the ancient Israelites placed their trust and hope in this wonderful vision and promise of God's loving power and grace to end all wars. By destroying the weapons of war, it certainly would be more difficult to carry out wars. What a wonderful day that will be when all wars will end! Thus with confidence and hope we pray: "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven."

Of course closely connected with Christ's non-violent kingdom is his peaceful kingdom. Listen again to our Colossians passage as it is rendered in the CEV: "God rescued us from the dark power of Satan and brought us into the kingdom of his dear Son, who forgives our sins and sets us free. God himself was pleased to live fully in his Son. And God was pleased for him to make peace by sacrificing his blood on the cross, so that all beings in heaven and on earth would be brought back to God."

Christ's peaceful, reconciling work happened on his throne, which was the cross. By shedding his blood on the cross we are reconciled and brought into his kingdom of peace. The NRSV says we were "transferred" from the dark, Satanic kingdom to Christ's kingdom. The verb "transferred" suggests being reassigned and relocated to a new place, a new home, a new calling, moved out of the arena of death and disorder (the power of darkness) into a fully reconciled new life.<sup>2</sup>

This non-violent, peaceful kingdom is also one of forgiveness. In our gospel passage, while dying on the cross, Jesus forgives the very ones who crucified him, the enemy, when he prays:

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1 Bruce Prewer, "An Unkingly King," at: <<http://bruceprewer.com/DocC/C64king.htm>>.

2 Walter Brueggemann, "A New King and a New Order," *The Christian Century*, October 28, 1992, p. 963.

“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” That reminds me of the following story.

During the Korean War a South Korean Christian civilian was arrested by the Communists and ordered shot. But when the young Communist leader learned that the prisoner was in charge of an orphanage, caring for small children, he decided to spare him and kill his son instead. So they took his nineteen-year-old son and shot him right there in front of the Christian man.

Later, the fortunes of war changed and that same young Communist leader was captured by the UN forces, tried, and condemned to death. But before the sentence could be carried out, the Christian whose boy had been killed came and pleaded for the life of the killer. He declared that this Communist was young, that he really did not know what he was doing. The Christian said, “Give him to me and I will train him.” The UN forces granted the request and the father took the murderer of his boy into his own home and cared for him. And then, that young man, formerly a Communist, became a pastor, serving Christ. This is the power of forgiving love that can only be described as superabundant, the kind of love the dying Stephen reflected in the Book of Acts.<sup>3</sup> Such love was epitomized by King Jesus on the cross.

This is not an arrogant, aggressive, affluent earthly king who delights in asserting his power over others like an abusive dictator who oppresses the poor and vulnerable. King Jesus does not glory in such things as expensive robes, golden crowns, elaborate thrones, and massive castles and palaces. NO! He wore ordinary clothing, a crown of thorns, his throne was the cross, his castle and palace the kingdom of God, where the last, the lost and the least are first. His kingdom is the exact opposite of all worldly ones. Christ the King’s kingdom is one of nonviolence, peace and forgiveness. How the world needs Christ’s kingdom now!

So worship and serve Christ our King; follow Christ’s example by living a life of non-violence, peace and forgiveness. Christ’s kingdom is the only hope for this divided, corrupt, violent world. A kingdom and a King that reconciles all things and all people; a kingdom of love that shall reign forever and ever. For that, thanks be to God!

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<sup>3</sup> James S. Hewett, Editor, *Illustrations Unlimited* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1988), p. 224.