

Title: Acknowledging Christ as King  
Date: 11/20/2022 (Proper 29, Year C)  
Location: St. Alban's Episcopal Church  
Service: 10am Holy Eucharist (Hybrid)  
Readings: [Jeremiah 23:1-6](#); [Canticle 16](#); [Colossians 1:11-20](#); [Luke 23:33-43](#)  
Video Link: <https://youtu.be/A124dRJ19Qc?t=1745>

God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved,  
and though the mountains be toppled into the depths of the sea. (Ps 46:1-2)  
Amen.

Today is the last Sunday of the church year. It's called the Feast of Christ the King or the Feast of the Reign of Christ the King.

The language of "kingship" can feel out of date. In this day and age, kings tend to be ceremonial figures. They don't have much authority or influence beyond what we choose to give them.

This feast was instituted by the Catholic Church in 1925. In the years since, I can only think of a few people that were both anointed AND became widely known as "king." Anyone can refer to themselves as king, but for that nickname to stick, other people have to buy into it, and that...takes something extra. A few examples that came to mind were Elvis and Lebron James.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Elvis is called "the King" because of his unprecedented popularity.

The number of viewers he attracted to his television appearances and to his concerts with his charisma, his looks, and his stage presence was the likes of which the world had not seen up to that point.<sup>1</sup> Though he didn't invent the genre of rock 'n' roll, Chuck Berry and Fats Domino did, his fame and his popularity came to define what it means to be a "rock star."

LeBron James was nicknamed "King James" by his classmates when he and his cousin took their high school team all the way to the state championships and won.<sup>2</sup> Though it took him years to win a championship as a professional player, he was talented enough, and some might say he was arrogant and egotistical enough, that the nickname stuck.

Can you think of anyone else that popular culture has crowned "king"? (George Strait, King of Country Music. Michael Jackson, King of Pop)

When we think about having tremendous influence, perhaps these days Jesus would be more accurately crowned "queen." Queen Elizabeth has left a more lasting mark than any other recent king in history. Drag queens and transgender activists rioting at Stonewall Inn sparked the modern LGBTQ+ movement.<sup>3</sup> When it comes to entertainment, there's Queen Latifah<sup>4</sup> and Beyonce, also known as "Queen Bey."

What do these people have in common?

They are influential not just within their realms but beyond them.

They transcend borders, physical and metaphorical. They break through the boundaries of their particular genre of sport or music. The faithful subjects of these queens and kings snatch up memorabilia and merchandise. Anything companies can imagine putting their names or faces on, their fans will buy. These faithful subjects gather around screens or stand in line, real and virtual, to buy tickets so they can worship and pay homage. Basketball games and concerts are like communion, the crowd singing and cheering as one, united into one body by this modern-day religious experience.

Is this how we envision our relationship to Jesus the king?

Imagine Jesus doing a triumphant dance on the court after he soars over and dunks on sin and death. The rest of us sitting in the arena, heckling his opponents and cheering his every shot and every point.

Imagine Jesus singing songs that pierce the soul like Willie Nelson and selling concert tickets and crashing Ticketmaster like Taylor Swift. When we are moved by song lyrics, what are we moved to do with our body? When we become one with the crowd, it's exhilarating...AND where is that energy, that passion going?

So let's take a step back and ask,  
what does it mean in this day and age  
for us to acknowledge Christ as king?

The Catholic Church established the Feast of Christ the King in response to the horrors and trauma of the Great War, the rise of disillusionment with God and church after those same horrors and trauma, and the rise of secularism and nationalism. On the 1600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Nicaea,<sup>5</sup> it seemed like a good time to lay down some truths about Jesus, again.

Pope Pius XI wrote, "When once men recognize, both in private and in public life, that Christ is King, society will at last receive the great blessings of real liberty, well-ordered discipline, peace and harmony."<sup>6</sup>

This sounds lovely, AND I also read this with some skepticism. He's implying that putting ourselves under the subjection of Christ looks like putting ourselves under the authority of church, and while I love the church, I know it is made up of flawed people, priests included. Moreover, that means different things to people of different denominations, even **within** different denominations.

However, I do love and appreciate his explanation for why establishing a feast would help more people recognize the kingship of Jesus than issuing a teaching. According to him, "[Doctrinal pronouncements] speak but once, [feasts] speak

every year - in fact, forever. The church's teaching affects the mind primarily; her feasts affect both mind and heart, and have a salutary effect upon the whole of man's nature."

Furthermore, "the sacred rites, in all their beauty and variety, may stimulate him to drink more deeply of the fountain of God's teaching, that he may make it a part of himself, and use it with profit for his spiritual life."<sup>7</sup>

So, tying this back to the question I posed earlier, when we acknowledge Christ as king, we are giving him power over our mind and our heart, even the whole of our nature. Acknowledging Christ as king looks like participating in his kingdom to profit all aspects of life – physical, emotional, and spiritual - and the world around us. Each time we acknowledge Christ as king, we remind ourselves of the kind of king he is, the example we want to follow.

We don't just ask, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. We ask, "Jesus, we remember you, so come into this world and make this into your kingdom."

Nature hates a vacuum, and if we don't acknowledge Jesus as king, someone else, or something else, will fill determine where we direct our time, our energy, and our money.

If we aren't paying close attention, someone or something else will determine our priorities for us. Someone once told me, "We are never truly our own masters. Someone, something, always reigns over us; the question is whether or not we're aware."

Acknowledging Christ as king in this day and age looks like choosing to follow shepherds who will not use their power to scatter the flock or ignore our needs or drive us away from God. It looks like placing ourselves under the authority of those who will attend to God's people so that we will not fear any longer or be dismayed, or at least so that we will have a safe place for us to share our fear and dismay **and** to name our hopes for the kingdom we are building here with God.

Acknowledging Christ as king in this day and age is to embrace a vision of Jesus that is grand and magnificent and uncontainable. Jesus the Son of God as poetry, the mystery that stretches our understanding and imagination but can never be fully solved.

Jesus is the image of the invisible God. He is the firstborn of all creation **and** the firstborn from the dead; he precedes us in life **and** in resurrection. We are made in the image of God. People of all races, genders, sexualities, neurotypical or as my kids say, neuro-spicy, are **all** patterned after the Son of God, created through him and held together in him. We know that we are more than we could have ever imagined, because he is all that, **and** he is us.

Acknowledging Christ as king in this day and age is to follow in the footsteps of a man who does not save himself but instead gives himself away to save us. Jesus the Son of Mary as prose, the stories we tell again and again.

Ours is a king who managed to forgive those who didn't realize what they were doing **and** those who were condemned justly. He had the power to reconcile all things to God even when he was hanging on the cross like criminal. Despite everything going on in and around him, there was a stillness in him. Knowing that the fullness of God dwelled in him, he could confidently say, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in in Paradise." We know we can do more than we could've ever believed, because he is us, **and** he can do all that.

So, what does it look like in this day and age to acknowledge Christ as king?

It looks like getting off the sidelines and joining the game. It doesn't matter if your hand-eye coordination is as bad as mine. It doesn't matter if you might get something wrong. Everyone has something to learn, this is why we practice! And this is how we learn to show forgiveness and grace, not just to other people but to ourselves, too.

It looks like allowing our hearts, our minds, and our bodies to be moved by Jesus. Perhaps the words of today's scripture, the service, and maybe even the sermon can give us the strength and confidence to be more than we could have imagined, to do more than we could've ever believed.

Guided by Christ as poetry and prose, mystery and stories, may we find the stillness of God within, and may we move into and through the world centered in that stillness.

May we be so filled with the Spirit of God that we can give ourselves away without becoming empty.

May we continue to drink more deeply of the fountain of Jesus' teaching that it becomes part of the fabric of who we are and how we live, and may it transform our relationship with ourselves and with all those around us.

Jesus, we remember you, so come into this world and make this into your kingdom.

Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/story/why-is-elvis-called-the-king-of-rock-n-roll>

<sup>2</sup> <https://clutchpoints.com/lakers-news-lebron-james-close-friend-gets-honest-on-true-origin-of-the-king-nickname>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/drag-s-power-rebellion-keeping-stonewall-legacy-alive-n1021751>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.rachaelrayshow.com/celebs/21329\\_queen\\_latifah\\_chats\\_with\\_rach](https://www.rachaelrayshow.com/celebs/21329_queen_latifah_chats_with_rach)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.simplycatholic.com/the-solemnity-of-christ-the-king/>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_11121925\\_quas-primas.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_11121925_quas-primas.html) (Section 19)

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_11121925\\_quas-primas.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_11121925_quas-primas.html) (Section 21)