

Sermon for 24 November 2024 @ Bethesda UMC/Baltimore

Christ the King/Reign of Christ Sunday

Scriptures: 2 Samuel 23:1-7; Psalter (*Insert: Alternate Leader and People*) Psalm 132:1-12; Revelation 1:4b-8; John 18:33-37

Sermon

Suddenly, it's here: The last Sunday of the Christian year. As though we hadn't been taken by surprise already, the stakes are changed again, and the terms are different.

With very little pomp, and brief stage directions, we see Jesus standing alone before a puzzled authority. He's been deserted by all his friends and denied by the only one of them that's been spotted in the shadows outside ...and yet we know he's the only thing that matters in this picture.

We, the church, know where we belong. Whether we've been with him from the beginning, or just came in here, this is what matters. "My kingdom is not of this world," he answers Pilate's mystified question. "If it were, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over ... but as it is, my kingdom is not from here." "So, you are a king, Pilate asked him.

How does it get through to us that everyone who knows the truth listens to him?

The rest of today's readings are just scraps of evidence gathered from many sources to put it as it has come to us. The Book of Revelation, the Hebrew scriptures, the words of King David, all echo that wish, that hope, that things do work out, even if present circumstances and the direction of the news make that hard to believe.

We've watched that kind of love at work. We even touch it ourselves; and, God help us, if we get close, and keep close, we believe we can head in that direction, no matter what comes.

So, let us pray. Dear Lord, sometimes we barely hear. Sometimes it feels like our voice, and not yours. Sometimes we just step off the curb. and we've counted on our own resources, only to find we can't manage without help...and then it comes, from inside us, other times from outside us and unexpected; Plenty of times we discover it's not our problem but someone else's... and whether they're the problem or they give us the answer, we keep swimming.

Help us testify, Lord Jesus. Stay close. Please give us love and strength for this new year you've brought us to. Thank you for coming and staying, Lord, God who never draws back, Thank you. Hear our prayer.

Amen.