



FEAST of CHRIST, THE KING YEAR B – November 25, 2018

Today we celebrate the feast of Christ the King. It should be noted that Jesus never claimed that title for himself. He preferred to call himself the good shepherd. He let others call him king – and they did and so we do.

The words from the prophet Ezechiel (Ezechiel 34:11-12, 15-17) are a haunting reminder to all of us - of what the word “king” means in the mind of God. They were written 500 years before the birth of Jesus when the chosen people were slaves in Babylon.

God said, "I myself will pasture my sheep because those who are in charge are not doing the job...The lost I will seek out, the stray I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal...". In effect God said,"... those whom I have appointed to rule over my people (kings, priests, parents) are not doing the job."

He goes on, "I will NOT be like those who bind up heavy burdens to put on other peoples backs...but do NOTHING to help them. I will NOT be like those who fatten themselves on expensive food and fine wine, while the hungry are starving in their midst. I will NOT be like those who live in massive mansions ignoring the needs of the homeless."

Five hundred years later, God's son says, "I am the good shepherd, I know mine and mine know me..." He does not say, "I am the king of the universe, bow down before me!" Rather he says, "...I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you (John 15:15)". Some people call him a fool, others call him a king. He calls himself a good shepherd.

He tells us quite clearly in the gospel today (Matthew 25:31-46) that as the good shepherd he will separate the sheep from the goats...he will separate the good from the bad...the bad will go to eternal punishment and the good to eternal life. Those are his words, not mine. It's easy to deny the state of being we call hell, but you have to deny the teaching of Jesus in order to come to that conclusion.

Jesus is indeed a King, but his kingdom is not of this world. He now wears a crown that is radically different from the one he wore on Good Friday. It is no longer a crown of thorns; it is now a crown of glory.

On this feast day, we also celebrate, with deep gratitude, the dedication of our present church building 27 years ago. Reflect today on the memories you and your family have made in this place of worship. How have you changed over the years?

This is also a month of prayer for suffering Christians throughout the world, especially in the Middle East. Never underestimate the power of prayer. Our persecuted brothers and sisters are now wearing their “crown of thorns” just as Jesus wore his many years ago. In solidarity, we pray for them, that they may persevere in the arms of the Good Shepherd until they receive their “Crown of Glory” from Christ the King.

