



northminster presbyterian church

2400 old alabama road  
roswell, georgia 30076

25-Nov-2007 Christ The King Sunday

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 1:68-79 Colossians 1:11-20

**SERMON:** Christ Our King (Rev. Dr. Walter Jones)

Jesus! Jesus of Nazareth, who was known as the Shepherd and Teacher, called Master and Friend. Some would say he was Elijah or one of the Prophets. It was clear that He was God's messenger; a worker of miracles. They came to think of Him, at least those closest, as the Messiah, the Christ. This son of Mary and Joseph was also of a royal line, a son of David He was called and thus King, or set to music, *King of Kings*.

This day, Christ the King Sunday, may be new to some of us, sandwiched between Thanksgiving and Advent with which we are more familiar. Often we skip over it, when it has for us, particularly when we will celebrate a baptism, much power to inform and inspire us.

When the church calendar was established, the first great event was Easter. It was the resurrection of Jesus Christ that taught all of His followers to re-interpret all that they had been taught and experienced about Him. So with Easter established, it was easy enough for those making out the calendar to count forty days until He ascended. And then fifty days until Pentecost. And then following Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit. Now that God was present in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, they established a Sunday called Trinity Sunday. It was generations, hundreds of years, before celebrated Christmas. One of the church fathers said, "Well, He could never have been ministering to people like us, He could never have died and been raised again if He had never been born... we need to celebrate His birthday." And so we established Christmas. And then a season building up to that we called Advent.

And so now you get the feel of the "flow". The church year begins the first Sunday in December. Four Sundays of preparation, then Christmas. Next Epiphany, when the wise men came and the Gospel was available to gentiles. And then the baptism of our Lord, which was really the beginning of His ministry. Transfiguration, which was when Jesus glowed with the presence of God, and appeared with Elijah and Moses. Then we make our walk through Lent, Palm Sunday, Good Friday and the season of Easter. Ascension, Pentecost and Trinity Sunday. And then we enter into what, in the church, we call Ordinary Time... June, July, August. I have a personal theory that when Jesus returns, it will be August or early September because we have a big gap in the church calendar there and it simply makes sense.

In the Fall, many of the holidays are appropriate to what is going on in us spiritually. World Communion Sunday, the first Sunday in October. Reformation Day, when we celebrate the strength of scripture in our following as protestants. All-Saints Day when we celebrate the goodness of those who have gone on ahead and now the last Sunday in the church calendar, Christ the King.

Now, Jesus lived in a time when they knew all about kings. And why, then, Christ the King in this place? Well, it does seem a culmination; all that life of Jesus with us at first and then doing things for us and then leaving us. Christ before us and now Christ within us leading to that day when we acknowledge ourselves all as His subjects. You and me... not merely of the church, *but of all the world*.

In 1925 the Pope, then Pius XI, wrote an encyclical, which is a paper focusing the attention of the Catholic Church on the importance of this image of Christ as King. And from that, he stressed,

and I suppose the rest of the church took on, this notion that we should celebrate the end of our year by proclaiming Christ as King.

Considering what impact that should have on us, he wrote that Christ should rule in all of us. In our hearts, because Christ is love and because we all know that justice should reign in the world. That all people should have enough and that no one person should have so much at the expense of another. He should rule in our wills because He inspires us; He died for us and He re-united us with God. And He should rule in our minds as well to bring us the truth and in our bodies to control our behavior and to inspire our fitness. Christ should reign in us and in this notion of Christ as King, *we find the power for our lives to be changed.*

Once upon a time there was a sergeant in the British Army. He was a tough guy. He went into the military right out of school. He learned to survive by being rough. He adopted not only the manner of the military, but also the language of the military as he experienced it. The poor man was unable to say even a single sentence without some "blue" word in it. Blankety-blank and blankety-blank and bleep-bleep would have been his dialogue on a regular basis. One day this very military, tough and profane man was called to the CO's office and was told of all things that the king wanted to come to their base and wanted a tour of the enlisted quarters and wanted somebody to take him through a typical day. About an hour's worth of time spent together and the commanding officer said to this sergeant, "You are the man that I want to lead him around." With his typical language, the sergeant said, "I cannot do that blankety-blank blankety-blank. It would never work." The commanding officer gave no ground: "It's you and I want you to be ready." So, the weeks passed and there was general snickering around the base. Everyone was thinking, "The CO cannot be serious that the sergeant is going to lead the king around on a tour. Boy, the king is going to improve his vocabulary!" And the day came and everybody waited with smiles on their faces. The two were introduced and the king fell in beside the sergeant. And for almost sixty minutes, the sergeant guided the king through the mess hall, the barracks and the routine of the day. And not one profane word came out of the sergeant's mouth. Everyone was amazed and they congratulated the sergeant. Time passed and it was about three weeks later when someone said, "Sergeant, the king is gone now. You can get back to normal... I haven't heard you curse in several weeks." The sergeant replied, "I don't intend to." "How is that possible?" the other man asked. The sergeant said, "Well, now I get up every day as if the king was walking beside me."

In this notion of being *present with the King*, we find the power to change those things within us that we need to change; to live on a higher plain; to rise above what we have settled for. And to truly be His subjects and to honor Him in the way that we behave. There is potential in this and it comes to us, it seems to me, in two ways.

Now, consider me a name-dropper if you will, but I once received an invitation to have tea with the Queen of England. Let me tell you about that. I was on a pulpit exchange. The minister from Scotland had come to Alpharetta Presbyterian Church... a wonderful place to visit in July and August when it is 95 degrees. And I was enjoying Edinborough in the 60's. An invitation came to the house; and invitation to Jean, our daughter Carmine and me. 'The Lord Chamberlain has been commanded by the Queen to invite you to tea on such-and-such a day at Holyroodhouse, which is the palace there in Edinborough. Now, it was exciting for me. But for the women, who had to go out and buy hats and gloves, it was an occasion! We hired a taxi to take us there and he let us off in the parking lot. Flashing our invitations, we entered through the gate onto this expansive lawn. And there was the palace! At the time, we were living in a house that we described as three, two and a door. You know, three windows on the second floor and a window on either side of the door on the first floor. Well, the queen lives in a seventeen, sixteen and a door. There was a massive tent the size of a football field where we were fed and two bands; one on either side of the palace grounds. One would fly a flag when it was their turn to play and then they would lower the flag and the other band would raise their flag and play. It was splendid. We feel into line about twelve-deep thinking that at least we would get a glimpse of her. One of the royal archers, dressed just like Robin Hood with green tights and a bow in one hand said, "When the queen descends those stairs, as soon as she is in the grass, you may swing around." Which

we did, putting Jean and Carmine on the front row and me on the third row, having given away my place as ministers must. Anyway, the queen was as close to me as I am to the cross on the table here. Because Jean and Carmine were talking and someone heard their southern accents, one of the members of the royal family came over and talked to them because he was on his way to Alabama to represent the crown.

All of that happened because we received an invitation and opened it. In much the same way, the King invites you and me to come, not just for tea, but forever. An invitation comes to be His subject and it is for us simply to accept and receive all that goes with it. And if grace is not your way; if law is your way, then in Acts remember that passage where the people are confronted with what they have done. Feeling their own unworthiness, they ask what they should do and the leader replies, "*Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.*" If you feel unworthy of opening the invitation, then follow the command of Christ.

On this day when we celebrate a baptism, realize that this is your invitation to be baptized also. Not today, but when the time is right, come and talk to me or to Susan or to Carolyn or to Brent. It is that simple and that profound. If you would be the King's person, then come in His name and be claimed.

In that same passage that confronts the people, Peter goes on to say, "*The promises of the King are for you and your children and for all who hear the call.*" It will soon be time for us to baptize Anders, and in the course of that ceremony, after the parents have answered the questions and the Congregation has responded, we will call him by certain names: Child of the Covenant, Lamb of the Fold and today, citizen of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

So it is with all of us. *Thanks be to God. Amen.*

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#### **Luke 1:68-79**

68"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. 69He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, 70as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, 71that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. 72Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, 73the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us 74that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. 76And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, 77to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. 78By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, 79to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

#### **Colossians 1:11-20**

11May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully 12giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. 15He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; 16for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. 17He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. 19For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.