

New Hope Lutheran Church

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November 21, 2021 Christ The King Sunday

Coming Events

Nov 23

2:00 Finnish Bible Study **Finlandia-Impola Room**

Nov 24

10 – 1 Kahvi Time **Regent St. (inside)**

Nov 25

6:30 Finnish Bible Study **Zoom**

Nov 28

10:00 Finn. Worship Service † **Voima Hall**
2:00 Eng. Worship Service † **Regent St.**

Dec 4

10 – 1 Christmas Kahvi Time **Regent St.**

Dec 11

2:00 Caroling **Finlandia Village**

Dec 16

7:00 Caroling **Zoom**

Dec 17

6:00 Most Beautiful Christmas Carols **Voima Hall**

In our prayers Ruth, Esme.

Opening Hymn – Come Thou Almighty King (408)
<https://youtu.be/mgzRB4gEPf4>

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and ever-living God, you anointed your beloved Son to be priest and sovereign forever. Grant that all the people of the earth, now divided by the power of sin, may be united by the glorious and gentle rule of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Psalms 93

- ¹ The Lord reigns, he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength; indeed, the world is established, firm and secure.
- ² Your throne was established long ago; you are from all eternity.
- ³ The seas have lifted up, Lord, the seas have lifted up their voice; the seas have lifted up their pounding waves.
- ⁴ Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the Breakers of the sea—the Lord on high is mighty.
- ⁵ Your statutes, Lord, stand firm; holiness adorns your house for endless days.

First Reading “Daniel 7:9 – 10, 13 – 14”

9 “As I looked, “thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. **10** A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

13 “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. **14** He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Second Reading “Revelation 1:4b – 8”

4 Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, **5** and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, **6** and

has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. **7** “Look, he is coming with the clouds,” and “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him”; and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.” So shall it be! Amen. **8** “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel “John 18:33 – 37”

Glory to you, O Lord.

Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” “Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?” “Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?” Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.” “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

*The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.***

Sermon

By Rev. Charles Nolting
“Define King”

One of the difficulties we may have on this day, Christ the King, is to determine what we mean by the word “King”. Technically, for most of us, I suppose the word “King” makes us think of monarchs today who rule from some moldy old castle, possibly in Europe somewhere. These days we might often think of them as mere figureheads whose likeness may appear on legal tender, and whose families make for tabloid fodder.

Of course, once upon a time kings could be more like those whom we refer to as *dictators* today. They had absolute power over every aspect of their country’s doings. They could have individuals picked up, jailed, or even killed for displeasing them. They could charge taxes on whatever items they chose, from the use of roads, to land taxes, to even one case of taxing how many windows your home had. Often a portion of the taxes went back to the citizenry in the form of an army to protect the country, to build roads to move goods, and some form of law enforcement.

Like a number of dictators today, they could be cruel people who attempted to keep most of the wealth to themselves, and their families, although they also were well aware that if too great a portion of the citizenry became upset with them, they might also be facing a rebellion or some form of coup by a rival for the throne. You had to keep a certain percentage of the population happy, otherwise there might be a heavy price to pay.

It also helped to inform people in some way that God had put you on the throne, so any actions against royalty could also be considered actions against God. In ancient times some heads of state even claimed to be god. It was one way of coercing the common folk to follow their lead and drive away any thoughts of rebellion.

Such was the case in the Roman empire where Caesar liked to be thought of as a god. So when we hear of Pilate asking Jesus about his royal status in our gospel today, we have to understand that Pilate viewed any challenge to Caesar's authority as a challenge to the divine order of the world, not to mention a challenge to Caesar the political head.

You see, Pilate had much the same problem as we do, that of defining the word "king". To Pilate, like most people, "king" was a political term that defined who was in charge and had all the power. So Pilate was really asking Jesus if he was a threat to the establishment.

You can't really blame Pilate for that assumption because that is how the chief priests had defined their problem with Jesus to the Romans. Their real problem with him of course, was that Jesus was disrupting their religious doctrine and undermining their authority to be God's messengers. Normally that might be overlooked but the Jesus movement was gaining surprising momentum and the chief priests did not want or need the competition. And so, they had to plot a way to get rid of Jesus permanently. Unfortunately for them, they didn't have the authority to publicly kill Jesus, but since the Romans did, they presented Pilate with the story that Jesus was a threat to the entire Roman empire, and needed to be eliminated.

Looking at that situation today, it feels kind of laughable that one person from a downtrodden neighborhood, in some underrated country, could take over the might of the Roman empire. And yet, as history has shown, the movement of Christ's followers has long outlived one of the greatest empires in the history of the world. Is it possible that – because Pilate

had such a narrow definition of "king" – it crumbled the entire Roman empire? In spite of Jesus attempting to explain that yes, he is a king, but just not the king of a certain people or place, but the king of all time and space.... Well, that may be difficult for us to wrap our heads around as well.

It's difficult for us to trust someone else to look after our interests because too often that trust has been broken by earthly rulers, among others. All earthly rulers – even those most well intentioned - are going to make decisions based on inadequate information, inadequate power, and inadequate resources to satisfy everyone. We would much rather just trust ourselves as much as that is possible. We don't like to give up what power we do have, and may consider ourselves rulers and kings over our own personal realms.

What we often forget is that God in Christ not only does have absolute power, but also that (unlike human rulers) God in Christ is incorruptible; having the power, the resources, and the information to serve everyone's best interests. That doesn't mean everything is right in the world, but things like poverty, sickness, war, and injustice are bound to this world, and have limited power.

So today we are reminded that while Christ's kingdom is not of this world, it does still encompass this world. The kingdom of God, like any kingdom, has citizens who have made themselves subject and obedient to the will of the King, and who work according to his purposes. So, for those whom Christ is their king, some help the poor build better lives. Some help heal and comfort the sick and dying and grieving. Some of those citizens are struggling to bring peace and justice wherever they can in this world. Followers understand that this here is a ruler we can trust, and so we work to bring about that kingdom on earth as best as we can.

Because Jesus our King accepted death on the cross, evil may still exist, but it will never prevail. Christ our King spoke the final word by his resurrection and that word is grace; something neither sin nor evil can stand against.

Making Christ our King does not mean we are powerless. We are all given power by God to participate in this kingdom Jesus rules over. Our job as citizens is to use that power wisely in service to the one who gave his life for us.

It could be that the accusations made by the chief priests to Pilate were more accurate than anyone could have anticipated: Jesus actually was a threat to Caesar's power. How much

does Caesar influence your life today? How much does Jesus influence your life today? That's a power that endures and can be trusted. That's the power of the one who is, and who was, and who is to come. That's the power of Christ the King in whom we can trust to lead us. Amen.

Hymn – Rejoice, for Christ is King (430)
<https://youtu.be/R12jDzbuZeE>

Prayers

Eternal God, you hold firm amid the changes of this world. Hear us now as we pray for the church, the world, and everyone in need.

God, you sent your Son Jesus to testify to the truth. We pray for preachers, missionaries, evangelists, and teachers who carry your forgiveness and love to the world. Fill their words and actions with compassion and kindness so that your truth will shine. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, you sent your Son Jesus to liberate all of creation. We pray for all living things longing for the freedom to flourish, from ancient trees and wild grasses to endangered animals and rare insects. Give human beings compassionate hearts to care for them. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, you sent your Son Jesus to lead us into the way of peace. Direct the members of international alliances in choosing a nonviolent path toward the future. Give them the humility and wisdom to make just decisions to benefit all. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, you sent your Son Jesus to make us into your own people, set free to serve you. We pray for people who serve the well-being of others, especially ministries in our community. Renew them in their work. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, you sent your Son Jesus to rule in all times and places. We pray for the friends of our congregation who are unable to join our worship in person and for all who are sick and suffering. Join their prayers with ours and unite them with us in the body of Christ. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, you sent your Son Jesus to be our beginning and our ending. We give thanks for those whose lives have given us a glimpse of Jesus' reign of justice and peace. Empower us to join their witness. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God our hope and strength, we entrust to you all for whom we pray. Reign with us always, through Jesus Christ, our Savior, who taught us to pray.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. **Amen.**

Hymn – Soon and Very Soon (439)

<https://youtu.be/6bv6lYaZc8w>