

**“A Peculiar King”
Matthew 25:31-46
Christ The King Sunday
November 23rd 2008
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Kingdoms are more of a novelty these days in an era of democracy. There are very few lands that still have a monarchy that actually rules the land. Usually we refer to them as dictators in the Middle East especially, except for a very few. But most of them now are just very rich people who came from a long line of very rich people who used to have a lot of power. The most prominent one we think of course is the monarchy of England and Queen Elizabeth. But there are also sitting monarchs in six other European countries, there is still an Emperor of Japan yet their jobs are at best ceremonial and are kept more for sentimentality than for any actual type of political power. Yet in the church we pray for the kingdom of God to be on earth as in heaven and we pray on the Christ the King Sunday for his return. Many of us like the Israelites of Jesus day were expecting a triumphant return of a king who would make everything better all of a sudden. Today I think we still are expecting that and we think it will be a little something like the movie clip we are going to see. Lets watch.

That clip was from Superman returns and that is his first official save. That's how most of us expect Jesus to return, in a Blaze of glory with the roar of the crowd and reversing a dramatic turn of events. That is what the people of Jerusalem wanted. But Jesus never promised that. Jesus is a peculiar king and said that his kingdom is going to be

just as peculiar. When he gathers the people together and returns in glory we would expect things like him ruling with absolute power and crushing victories. Many still long for this warrior king. But instead of the scepter and the sword, or even dramatic rescues, Jesus gives us sheep and goats. Huh?

What Jesus tells us is that his kingdom is not defined by boundaries and borders not by creeds or confessions despite what others might think nowadays, not even Methodists. It will be defined by peoples behavior in relation to the least of these.

That is why we celebrate when we come to the end of the Christian year and proclaim Christ the king, but it's a peculiar celebration. It is a celebration about what we have done for, and how we have served others in building the kingdom. This is peculiar to say the least but even more so we celebrate those kingdom builders who have no idea that they are even doing so.

The thing about this parable as it relates to the kingdom is that both parties are surprised by the verdict that Jesus gives. The *sheep* are surprised of their inclusion for doing simply what they ought to do as their job. The *goats* are surprised too because it never crossed their mind that there could be consequences for their inactions and not just their actions. But this is what the peculiar kingdom is all about.

Finding ways to serve because it is what Christ calls us to do.

Whenever we give of ourselves not for the sake of riches but because God calls us to do so we build up this kingdom and we honor this

peculiar king. When we talk about our stewardship and our offerings and why it is important to tithe is not because we can buy our way into heaven, but it is about making a spiritual commitment to be a sheep, to fulfill our commitment as Christ body the church as kingdom builders for the sake of funding the ministries that nurture and support the least the last and the lost. I don't want to come to the point this year or any year and have to say that we will have no Bible school this year because of the stock market, or the new video game that came out. These things won't get us eternal life. As we approach the holiday spending season and as we see where we are in meeting our obligations as a church, will our decisions reflect the example of what it means to be in the peculiar kingdom of heaven?

This week many of us will gather at the table of friends and family, and give thanks for what blessings we have and the ability to be together. Others out of the generosity of their own hearts will do the same but at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter. At which place is the king more likely to show up?

Last week we talked about that day coming like a thief in the night and to not be surprised when the king comes, but I tell you the king has come and the king is here, and the king will come again. We see the face of Christ when we encounter him in each other, we see the face of Christ, when we serve at our community meal, we see the face of Christ in a newborn babe. We see and welcome Christ the king when we gather at his table, knowing that we may have fallen short, knowing that we at times have been goats in the kingdom

consuming whatever we can, knowing that through the bread and the wine, we can be transformed into those sheep, who are forgiven and made new and whole and little by little, build the peculiar kingdom of God that welcomes all. And we do know that Christ will come and is coming again in a stable far away from home where shepherds and angels sing glory to God.