

**November 26, 2017  
Isaiah 51:4-8  
Ephesians 1:18-23  
Pastor Rosanna McFadden  
Creekside COB**

### **“Time and Time Again”**

**Good morning! We have a rare opportunity this morning, at least from a worship planning standpoint. I know that most of you aren't part of worship planning -- some of you may be surprised to hear that planning is part of worship at all -- but I want to unravel this a bit so you know a bit of what's behind today's service.**

**The last Sunday of the Christian year is observed as Eternity Sunday, or Christ the King Sunday. It is the new year's eve party which ties up the whole of the year with the assertion that Jesus is Lord of time itself. For the new year that most of us are accustomed to on December 31 and January 1, there are the images of the old man with the scythe, reaping the end of the old year, and the little baby who represents the beginning of the new year. Christ the King Sunday gives us many names and images of Jesus Christ: Lord, King, Morning Star, Savior, Shepherd, Lamb of God: but none of these images are old and feeble, because Jesus is stronger than even Father Time. For mortals, time wins. But Jesus Christ transcends time, he was before time began, and will be after time has ended.**

**We do get the baby, though. The Christian year begins with the season of Advent, four Sundays before Christmas on December 25. The Christian new year will begin next Sunday, December 3. This is a time of preparation and anticipation of Jesus' birth; the baby we know is coming. What is great about this year is that we didn't have to put Thanksgiving and Christ the King together: we actually have a Sunday after Thanksgiving to celebrate Christ the King before the first Sunday in Advent. In practical terms, this means that Worship Team has a Sunday to regroup instead of having to put up Christmas**

decorations during the week of Thanksgiving. In theological terms, it gives us an opportunity to finish well before we start again.

Every Sunday should, of course, be Christ the King Sunday. There is never a time in the Christian year or in our lives that Christ is not the King. But it is good for us, before we enter the story of Advent and the adventure of Jesus' birth, to remember who that little baby is and who he has always been; that the adventure of Bethlehem started with creation and is still at work in our world. As Paul writes in Ephesians, Christ is "the completion of him who himself completes all things everywhere." It is also worth remembering that the statement Jesus is Lord or Christ is King began as a subversive political statement, and is still today. Time and time again.

I included the Old Testament reading from the prophet Isaiah 51 to highlight the continuity of Jewish and Christian testimony: like those of us today who are trying to understand and live in the light of God's promises, Isaiah has faith that the end of history is a done deal. There will be a ruler at the end, and it won't be a president or dictator or king or queen. Our hope -- our only hope -- for victory is the Lord. The One whose law will give light to the nations, whose deliverance will last forever, and whose victory will endure when everything else has worn out and passed away.

Isaiah doesn't name this ruler as Jesus Christ, but as Christians, we proclaim that Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah's hope; Jesus is the ruler whom God promised; Jesus is God in human form, who was raised from the dead and seated above all authorities, powers, and lords. God put all things under Christ's feet and gave him to the church as the supreme Lord over all things. Wow! That is a tall order, and that is what Paul asserts in Ephesians 1.

So here, as I see it, is the challenge for us, and for all people who believe in God's promises and the hope to which we have been called: how do we live in this time of Promised, but Not Here Yet? This is a question we must answer time and time again. Today on Christ the King Sunday when we celebrate Jesus in our music and scripture readings; next Sunday when the new church year begins and we're told that the baby is coming, but he's not here yet. And in the meantime, there's carpenter who thinks he's been betrayed and a

woman who claims to be a virgin who has some explaining to do. You see, this big epic story of the God of eternity and the supreme Lord of all things -- it still comes down to you and me, and what we're going to do about it.

God allows people the free will to completely ignore Christ, and even to deny that he exists. This is the case in many places in the world -- it is increasingly the case in places which have historically claimed to be Christian: Europe and North America. An increasing number of people, notably followers of Islam, accept that Jesus was a historical figure, a prophet, even, but deny his divinity, and certainly deny that Christ is King in any political or theological way. There are also people who would accept the statement that Jesus is Lord or Christ is King, but it has no effect on how they live their lives -- how they spend their money, how they volunteer their time, what they give the highest importance to in their lives. They may be culturally Christian in a vague sense of that word -- they may sing Christmas carols with good cheer and prepare a nice brunch on Easter, but otherwise go about their business without any sense of Christ has claim to their allegiance or loyalty. If you asked them why they don't participate in any community of faith, they'll probably say something like: Christians are hypocrites; I have too many other things to do; or I'm spiritual, but not really religious.

I'd say this last group of people may be the ones who have the most difficult time hearing the good news of Jesus Christ. They've already heard it -- or they think they have -- and they've already seen people who call themselves Christians and are just as petty, nasty, and inconsistent as anyone else. Maybe even more so. How can we convince people who have seen Christians behaving badly that Jesus is Lord? It won't be easy. Bad behavior tends to be what makes the news, and if you've listened to the news lately, there have been plenty of allegations of bad behavior -- some of it about people who claim to be Christian. If Christianity is less important than politics, we have not witnessed to the lordship of Jesus Christ. We can disagree about politics and political issues, but as Christians there ought to be some things we agree on, and one of those is the assertion that Jesus is Lord; and that should actually make a difference in how we live and how we treat other people.

**The politics of 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine: the world of the historical Jesus, his followers and the writers of the New Testament, was dominated by the Roman Empire, and the kings who ruled it. Minted on their coins, along with the profile of the ruler was the statement Caesar is Lord. Some Jewish zealots would not even touch Roman coins because of this statement. Followers of the Messiah, the Rabbi Jesus, claimed that Jesus is Lord. It was an assertion that could get them killed, and in some cases it did. The Romans had all kinds of gods, including their rulers, but to claim that there was a Lord who was greater than their Caesar was a something they could not tolerate.**

**I'm here to tell you this morning that there has never been a human prince, president or prime minister who comes close to Jesus Christ. We live in the interim time between Promised and Not Here Yet. Even after centuries of waiting, Not Here Yet. Even after four weeks of Advent and our celebration of Christmas Eve and Christ With Us, Christ is with us, but the end of time and the completion of God's promise to complete all things everywhere is Not Here Yet. Every day brings us closer. Every choice we make to choose Christ and proclaim him as Lord of all brings us closer. When we commit to make those choices and proclaim in words and with our actions that Jesus is Lord time and time again, then we will bring eternity closer to our lives. Jesus is Lord. Time and time again. Amen.**