

## Christ the King

By: Fr. Chris

President George W. Bush had once been asked to name the leaders of India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine when he was governor. He had a hard time with that question. It would seem only right that he would know who those leaders are. Yet, when I thought about that question I realized that probably most Americans and I would have a problem with that question. In fact, virtually everyone knows what President Clinton looks like, but if you had to pick out the Prime Minister of Canada could you? How about the Mexican president? Unless a world leader is in the news a lot or becomes our enemy we don't know what they look like or what they stand for.

Most kings and rulers know that. So, they ride in limousines and chariots. They dress in robes and crowns. They speak from high podiums and stages. They have bodyguards and palaces. All of the trappings lead the subjects of these kings and rulers to know whom they are to give honor and respect to.

Today we proclaim that Jesus is Christ the King. Yet our king has chosen not to be known as one who inhabits palaces and wears gold. Instead, he was known as one born in a stable and raised in a tiny village. He wore simple clothes and was stripped naked and died on a cross. His crown was thorns and his bodyguards were apostles who ran away when Jesus needed them. Not much of a king?

Today we understand what kind of king we serve. Jesus tells us a parable of what His kingdom consists of. He gathers all the people together and says that they will be judged not on how many weapons of mass destruction they could amass. It won't be a nation built on economic wealth and power. The ranking of importance in Jesus' kingdom is not based on how many Fortune 500 companies are there. It also isn't based on the standard of living index. Most nations are ranked on what their per capita income is and what kind of healthcare, how many people are enrolled in colleges and universities, and how many cars, televisions, and telephones are owned by the people. Notice Jesus doesn't count any of those things as important in His kingdom.

Instead, what is His kingdom about? He says that his kingdom will be known by how well the hungry, thirsty, sick, and lonely are cared for. The unusual part of this way of categorizing the kingdom is that the subjects will not be doing good for the king, they will be doing good to the king. Even more unusual is that the subjects won't even realize they are doing it. That is how commonplace it will be.

The righteous will be rewarded not because they earned it, but because they so knew their king that they would do as he would do. They would be the shepherds they were called to be. Likewise those who are expelled from the kingdom will be thrown out because they had not served their king. They had not heard the voice of their leader and responded with generous love.

In all of Jesus' life he shows us what kind of king he is. He is born of humble beginnings. He grows up in complete obscurity. His public ministry includes welcoming the lowly and outcast. He picks disciples not because they are well financed or have a high place in society. They are simple people who are willing to listen and learn from the Lord.

What does Jesus teach his apostles? He teaches them that God loves them. They are more precious than all the birds of the air and the flowers of the field. He teaches them to love on another and to forgive without counting the cost. He teaches them, that if they want greatness they need to serve others.

Jesus worked many miracles. He cured the sick, raised the dead, walked on water, calmed the sea, and turned water into wine. But all of those miracles were not done just to prove that he had power and that they should listen to him. He did his miracles mostly for his disciples. He wanted them to see that they too could do these things.

Recall the miracle of the multiplication of loaves. The crowds have heard Jesus all day. Now it is evening and the disciples realize there is not enough food for everyone. Jesus tells them to give them some of their food. They can't imagine how that would be of any use. When they trust him and give away their food they have an abundance. There are twelve baskets of food left over. When Jesus sends out the disciples to the neighboring villages he tells them to preach and heal the sick there. When Jesus ascends to heaven he instructs the disciples to go to all nations and heal. Jesus' ministry of healing wasn't meant simply to impress the crowds. He was instructing the apostles and us that the mission and ministry of Jesus is our mission and ministry too. The shepherd lives with the sheep. We are now the shepherds of Christ. Will we care for the sheep entrusted to us?

We give honor to Christ our king and shepherd by our care and concern for the sheep for as often as we do it to one of the little ones we do it for him. Do we recognize our king in the poor and sick of our world? That is all that matters. Amen.

## READINGS OF THE WEEK

Ezekiel 34:11-17

1 Corinthians 15:20-28

Matthew 25:31-46

November 23, 2014

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**節日起源：** 天主教會在禮儀年的最後一個主日，慶祝「主耶穌基督普世君王節」。這個節日原是教宗 Pius XI 在 1925 年所訂定，當年他為紀念尼西亞大公會議 1600 週年時，透過頒佈 Quas prima 通諭強調：對抗現世中各種毀滅力量，最有效的救援方法是承認基督的王權。於是教宗 Pius XI 訂定十月的最後一個主日為基督君王節，當時的想法是使這個節日和諸聖節相連，因為耶穌基督的勝利特別在顯示聖人及被選者的身份。在 1970 所新頒佈的教會禮典中，將這個節日移到禮儀年最後一個主日，基督君王節重心因而轉為強調末世性的意義：被舉揚的主不僅是教會禮儀年的目標，更是我們整個世上旅程的終點，耶穌基督「昨天、今天、直到永遠，常是一樣」（希十三 8），祂是「『阿耳法』和『敖默加』，最初的和最末的，元始和終結」（默二二 13）。

**最後審判的「啓示」：** 瑪竇福音的末世言論中有兩個高峰，首先是「人子來臨的先兆」（二四 29-31），其次是「世界末日的審判」（二五 31-46），這段經文就是本主日的福音內容。這是一個刻意安排的審判場面：「人子在光榮中，與眾天使一同降來 … 一切民族都要聚在祂面前。」它不是一個比喻，而是一個圖像性的「啓示言論」：人子坐在審判寶座上，分別義人和罪人，並且給予決定性的判決：永罰或永生（二五 46）。最後審判時的標準是具體地愛近人的行動，因為耶穌自己和一切受苦的人認同：「你們對我這些最小兄弟中的一個所做的，就是對我做的。」

**經文結構：** 這段經文的結構十分清楚，先是一個交待事情發生的「引言」（二五 31-33），接著便是整個審判過程的報導（34-45），其中以完全對稱的方式表達出審判者和義人（34-40）以及罪人（41-45）之間的對話，而最後便是審判的執行（46）。整篇經文是一個修辭學上的傑作，以極度尖銳的方式表達出決定性的思想：審判的標準在於對最人子最小兄弟（姊妹）所做的愛德行動；或者疏忽了對這些「最小者」——意思是受苦者和身陷困境者——應盡的責任。

**經文的背景：** 人子出現的情景，明顯地受到舊約中默示文學所描述的「上主的日子」（岳四 1-2；匝十四 2-3；依六六 18）的影響。人子來時將分別義人和罪人，如同牧人分開綿羊和山羊一樣。這裡反映出一個巴肋斯坦地區的生活背景，當地人在白天把一切牲畜放在一起牧放，到了夜裡則分別關在不同畜欄中，因為山羊需要比較溫暖的地方。此外，福音經也用了一般常用的象徵：右邊是好的，而左邊則是不好的象徵。

**個人的審判：** 最後的判決是根據每個人作為而訂的，每一個人都要站立在審判寶座前，依據他是否有愛的行為而被審判。雖然「一切民族」都聚集在審判寶座前，但這裡卻明顯的並非「民族性的集體審判」，而是針對每一個人獨立施行的審判。

**在愛德行動中和耶穌相遇：** 福音中提出六種具體的「愛德」行動，只是一些例子，真正的愛德行為當然遠超過這些。真實的、行動的愛，是瑪竇福音中特別重要的思想（五 7；九 13；十二 7），對初期基督徒而言，耶穌的宣講遺留在世間最大的效果，就是滿全祂的愛的命令。因此，福音直接把這些愛德行為和耶穌聯繫在一起：凡是對耶穌的最小兄弟所行的愛德，都是對祂做的。這說明義人在「最小者」身上和耶穌相遇，雖然他們可能在當時並未查覺。

**審判的君王就是世上的耶穌：** 如何瞭解審判的人子和最小者的認同呢？人子之所以如此說話，一方面因為祂曾經在人群中生活，立下了愛的榜樣，並要求大家去做；另一方面祂現在以生活的，末世的審判者的身份再次出現，要求大家交帳。這裡我們清楚的看出現世和未來的關係：審判的君王（人子）就是曾在世上生活的耶穌。這些「最小者」是人子的「兄弟」，這樣的思想大概來自於信仰團體中彼此以兄弟稱呼（五 22-24），但在普世性福傳和末世性審判的視野中，被擴展到一切的人。福音強調這是一個施於「一切民族」的審判，暗示在福音經文形成之時，福傳時代業已展開，因此，普世各民族都將面臨末世性人子的審判。

**審判的確定性：** 經文最後以極簡短的方式敘述了審判的執行：忽略而未實行愛德誠命的人，必遭受永遠的處罰；而義人則將獲得永生。這個經文所描繪的圖像，當然不能被瞭解為具體的審判過程；它的目的在於強調審判者人子的話具有決定性的效力。這是初期教會對耶穌的愛的教訓繼續反省後，以令人印象深刻的的方式呈現出來的結果。