

Church of the Good Shepherd
and
St. John the Evangelist

Christ the King
25 Pentecost
November 26, 2006
Fr. Bill McGinty

“Christ the King”
8:00am

Today is the Feast of Christ the King, the last Sunday of Pentecost. In celebrating this important feast, we are reminded that all time will end in the triumph of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the World.

Every time this title is depicted in picture or statue, Jesus is always seen with arms outstretched, wearing the vestments of a priest and a crown upon his head.

Today Christ the King marks the end of the church's calendar year, before we beginning again, with year ?? and the first Sunday of Advent. On this day six of our young people put themselves forward for Confirmation. For them it is the end of a journey, learning about their faith. It is also a beginning, for each of them as young Christian adults, setting out on a life long quest to live a life that has been touched by god and the Gospel.

We also welcome six adults who will be received by Bishop Paul into the Episcopal Church at the 10 o'clock service. For all twelve, we pray at this service that the Holy Spirit may fill their lives with his gifts.

It is absolutely a wonderful way to end this year with twelve people prepared to commit to Christ and his church. On December 3 another new parishioner will be baptized at the 10 o'clock service, and yet another on January 7.

In turning to the readings today, we have to detach ourselves from the kind of King and Kingship language that is used in the Books of Daniel, Revelation and Mark.

When Samuel first introduced Kingship to the 12 tribes of Israel in the 10th century BC, it was an alien concept to Israel. The 12 tribes belonged to a unique alliance that was held together by a sacred covenant. It was the idea that 122 tribes all with different interests could lay aside those interests for a common good. That good was the worship of their one God-Yahweh. They symbolized his presence among them by a sacred object. It was a gold chest mounted on short legs with two worshipping angels on its lid. It was so holy that it could not be touched by the human hand. Inside it held the remnants of the tablets of stone that God gave to Moses, and the ashes of the Prophet. But Israelites believed the Ark of the Covenant contained something more, it held the Spirit of their God.

Usually, the Ark rested in a black tent in the center of the camp called the Tabernacle. Inside was another tent called the Holy of Holies. When the 12 tribes reached the

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Promiseland, the Ark was placed at Schechem in the center of the land of Canaan. There the 12 tribes gathered to bind themselves together before their God. They called themselves the Amphitience League, bound together by love.

Even David, the greatest of the Kings of Israel realized that the Ark was more important than Kingship or monarchy. He had the Ark moved to his new capital: Jerusalem, and meeting its arrival at the city gate, he danced before the Ark like a crazy man, till it reached its resting place in the Great Tabernacle beside his palace.

Even the King could not enter the Holy of Holies. He longed to build a temple for the Ark but God said: "No."

Israel looked with distain on Kings and Kingship because everyone knew that there was only one King, Yahweh. Yahweh was king, of a Kingdom that had more to do with men's hearts than land, cities or armies.

Jesus being referred to as King has a deep symbolism. In the person of Jesus the idea of the Holy returns to the center of thought. We as Episcopalians are used to the Body of Christ language. Christ the King reminds all Christians that they are united in the one Christ. To him we owe our worship and loyalty. As we come to the end of the church's year today, our attention is focused once more, where it should be, on the person of Jesus. 90 years ago this church was consecrated. All around, those old Episcopalians surrounded themselves with images of their Christ.

From the stain glass window on every wall we are reminded why this church is here. It is here to fulfill the mission of Christ its King. In a recent sermon bishop Pal reminded the clergy of the diocese and I quote: "If you belong to a church that is concerned only with itself and who it is, you are not going to be around in 50 years, for the churches that succeed are those that are concerned with reaching out into the community to bring Christ message to others."

We have in this parish names in our parish directory of people who we have seen once or twice in the last three years. Life has accelerated for some people to the extent that they can no longer fit church or parish into their busy schedule. That used to worry and concern me greatly, for several years, but no more. The days of writing letters, sending cards and reminding people of their duty are officially over. this church has moved on to accepting that its destiny lies in attracting people who both want to be here to worship their God and want to do their part to further the mission of Christ in Pike County.

As we worship Christ as our King today I ask you to pray for our Daughters of the King and the work they do. Please also pray for our new parishioners and young people seeking the sacrament of confirmation.

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Amen+

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