



SUN • NOV 26  
9 AM • 11 AM

# *Kin-dom* *vs* *Kingdom*

*Christ the King*  
SUNDAY

Sunday, November 26, 2023  
“Kin-dom vs Kingdom”  
Megan Berry | Matthew 25:31-46

---

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.’ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You who are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life.”

Today in our liturgical calendar we recognize and celebrate Christ the King Sunday, also known as Reign of Christ Sunday. This is the last Sunday in our church year, basically our New Year’s Eve, before we start the next church calendar cycle with the First Sunday of Advent. While the origins of this particular day date back to 1925 and came from Pope Pius XI (11th) good intentions at attempting to remind the Church

that Jesus is our true King and that Jesus and God should be our ultimate authority, not the political powers of the day. It can be a day that brings up difficult questions that people may or may not want to wrestle with.

You see the language of “king” and “reigning” often feel opposite to what we associate Jesus with. Although we proclaim Jesus as our Lord and Savior, sometimes it’s easier to lean a little more heavily on the savior part than the lord part because lord has connotations that don’t always fit with what I associate with Jesus.

Maybe it’s just me, but when I hear language of kingdoms and reigning, I think of fantasy worlds like Game of Thrones with the seven kingdoms fighting for dominance and the ability to have their ruler sit upon the Iron Throne. Or The Witcher series where there is a constant war between the Elves, the Dwarves, and the Humans for who will be the “dominant” and “ruling” class and who will be considered “second class” citizens in the world.

While these may be fantasy worlds, they say something true about the ideologies of kingdoms, kingship, and reigning. Though there are and have been benevolent kings, the root ideologies for kings and kingship are often ones of wealth and power, maintaining hierarchy and status quo, and destroying one’s enemies to further the kingdom and keep the wealth that has been obtained for the king and his family.

Now these ideas do make for great shows and excellent books, these aren’t necessarily the ideologies that I associate with Jesus. Which makes celebrating and recognizing Christ the King Sunday a bit tricky, it almost makes me do a double take. Yes, Jesus is our Lord and Savior, yes Christ is our King, but this lordship or kingship that Jesus exhibits isn’t one of attaining the most wealth, destroying those in our path, or upholding a hierarchy that belittles and demeans those at the very bottom.

No, Jesus’ lordship is one of mutual respect and equality, where everyone has a seat at the table, where we’re expected to feed our neighbors, reach out in kindness to one another, and ultimately gather people in, not push them out. Jesus’ lordship teaches us abundance in all aspects of our lives and how to share that abundance with others rather than attempting to hoard it for ourselves.

So, my challenge for y’all and for me with this is reframing this Sunday as Christ our Leader Sunday. Because Jesus is more than a King issuing demands and commands to those in his power and working to obtain all the wealth he can. Instead, Jesus is our leader, showing us how to live in the ways that God hopes for, truly guiding us and the

disciples by example not just with words but with his deeds. By proclaiming Christ as our Lord and Savior and Leader, we are choosing to follow the path of equality, justice, and love for all, rather than dominion, wealth, and hierarchy.

These thoughts and wrestling with kingship language is part of where we get the debate of whether it should be called the kingdom of God or the kin-dom of God. The term kin-dom of God was first coined by Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, a Cuban-American Theologian who studied and taught *mujerista* and liberation theology.

For Isasi-Diaz, the use of the word kin-dom allowed for a more equal and expansive view of the kingdom of God that Jesus calls us to. This kin-dom recognizes the broad family we are as beloved children of God together, how we're all part of the family, regardless of whether we're Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, non-denominational, or any of the other many sects that has formed in the name of Christianity.

To adjust our language to the word kin-dom over kingdom is to continue to embrace the radical views of hospitality and love that Jesus attempts to teach the disciples and us through his parables and other teachings that we find in the gospels.

If we look back at our passage for today, the famous Matthew 25 passage that many in the PC(USA) are coming to know and love, we are met with some very lofty and high expectations for ourselves as a community or nation as it's put in the passage. We're reminded that as we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give drink to the thirsty, we are doing this to Christ as well, because Jesus is in these people who need food, water, a safe and warm place to sleep at night. And on the flip side, as we ignore those who are in need of these things, we are ignoring Jesus.

This passage gets at the heart of the upside-down nature of the kin-dom of God and the kind of leader that Jesus is for us. And while it can be overwhelming to think about doing this work individually, we're also reminded in this passage that we're not meant to do this hard work alone. Jesus isn't calling out individual disciples and placing them as sheep or goats, it's the nations, the communities that are being placed as sheep or goats. So, it's us as a community, as a nation, that is expected to work towards this new version of kin-dom together, where all are fed and clothed and housed.

And this work is larger than just us as Covenant Presbyterian Church or even us as John Knox Presbytery, this is work that the larger PC(USA) national body is taking up and really using to anchor ourselves as a denomination.

For those who don't know or want a little refresher course, there is a somewhat newer initiative within the PC(USA) called the Matthew 25 Initiative. This was started back in 2019 in large part due to Diane Moffett as she came on as Executive Director & President of PMA, the Presbyterian Mission Agency. Diane started the call for churches and presbyteries to really claim this Matthew 25 call and run with it, and for us a denomination to really put forth effort into doing this work together.

After a church or presbytery decides to accept this call (fun facts, we have accepted this call, we are a Matthew 25 church), the only expectation is that you work towards at least one of three focus areas: building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism, and eradicating systemic poverty and then share with others how you're doing this work.

This is hard work to do because there is so much work to do, but part of doing this together in community as Covenant, in community as John Knox Presbytery, in community as the national PC(USA) body is to encourage one another and to remember that many hands do make light work, so while eradicating systemic poverty or dismantling structural racism seems like a daunting task for this one congregation, it's less daunting if we work with others and keep Christ as our King, our Savior, our Leader through this hard but good work.

While I still want to wordsmith my way to better language that reflects the radical equality that Christ calls us to, regardless of what we call this particular liturgical day, whether we say kin-dom or kingdom, what matters at the end of the day is whether we uphold our call as a community to care for one another, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give drink to the thirsty because that is what really matters on this Christ our King, Christ our Leader Sunday. Amen.