

This is... the Last Sunday after Pentecost
 It is the Last Sunday in the church year
 It's the Last Sunday in the three-year cycle of the lectionary readings
 But it's called...
 Christ the King Sunday

We follow the life of Christ through the entire church year
 His divine conception and humble birth...
 his healing and teaching and revealing God's presence
 his trial... crucifixion... death... and burial
 His mighty resurrection and glorious ascension
 The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost
 And the long green season after Pentecost
 Ending here... on this day... Christ... the KING Sunday

For most Americans... kingship... is beyond our understanding
 Unless we have direct experience with a sovereign
 We can only guess what living under royalty might be like
 We have to rely on books and movies to understand kingship

Probably our most visible example of royalty is Great Britain's...
 constitutional monarchy
 Where the king... or queen... has a unique legal and ceremonial role,
 but exercises limited or no official political power.
 The prime minister and parliament hold governing authority.
 But it was not always so.

Because you see...
 Not all kings are righteous.

And when Kings behave badly
 There is oppression... revolution... war... death...

In the Old Testament

After the people of Israel arrived in the Promised Land

They did not have a king...

At least for the first thousand years...

The Lord God... was their king.

And he was faithful and just

But the people wanted a human king over them

So they could be like other nations

And the Lord granted it.

Some kings were good and just... others...

And God addressed their bad behavior through the prophet Jeremiah

***Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!
You have scattered my flock, driven them away, not attended to them.
So I will attend to you for your evil doings.***

As for the flock... the people of God...

God had this to say...

***I will raise up for David a righteous Branch,
and he shall reign as king and deal wisely,
and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.***

And that king... is Jesus.

***Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; *
he has come to his people and set them free.
He has raised up for us a mighty savior, *
born of the house of his servant David.***

Jesus is the king who reigns over the whole earth.
 Jesus is the king of all creation
 Jesus is the king above all kings
 King over every nation, tribe, neighborhood, every single living thing
 King over everyone and everything
 And although he has ultimate authority...
 He is not always recognized as king.

When people don't get what they want
 They may say...

I do not submit to your authority!

or

You have no standing in my life!

or simply

You're not the boss of me!

But make no mistake about it
 We all fall under authority of someone...

I may be rector of this church
 But I am under the authority of my bishop, the canons, and Scripture...

Have you ever noticed on our bulletin
 The names of those in authority at St. Gabriel's
 The one at the top of the list is
 Jesus Christ, the head of the Church

We are all under the authority of Christ the King...
 And when we submit to it... when we honor the Lord...
 When we do his will...

This week we saw the movie, The Queen
 Helen Mirren played Queen Elizabeth
 It was set during the time of princess Diana's death

People were outraged over the queen's failure to respond to the tragedy
 Surveys showed that 1 in 4 britans... 25% of the people...
 Favored ending the monarchy.

Prime Minister Tony Blair pleaded with the queen...
 Respond appropriately...
 And put an end to the uproar...

When the royal family visited a tribute of flowers for Diana
 The queen was deeply saddened...
 Both by the outpouring of love for Diana...
 and the critical posters among the offerings...
 she steeled herself, smiled and turned to greet the motionless crowd
 when she saw a you girl holding a small bouquet... she said...

Would you like me to place those for you?

No.

Oh.

These are for you.

For me?

Through a most genuine smile

Thank you.

She looks up at the gathering, blinks back a tear and says

Thank you very much.

And as she walks past her subjects.

One by one

They bow to her.

She is their Queen...

We... are under the authority of a sovereign King
Paul wrote in Philippians chapter 2

*God highly exalted Jesus
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

And still... people reject our true king...

In the gospel reading...
Christ the King hung on the cross...
With the words
“This is the King of the Jews”
scrawled on a board near his head
as the people chided

If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!

While the thief on the cross next to him demanded
Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!
While the other criminal admonished
*We have been condemned justly... we are getting what we deserve...
but this man has done nothing wrong.*

And he pleads to his true king
Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

We have a King. And it is Jesus.
 And the sooner we recognize that fact
 And live it out
 The sooner we can live in peace... and joy...

Because it is only when we recognize and honor Jesus as our King
 That we make room for him to live in our lives.

We want God's blessings
 We crave God's leadership and guidance
 We know that we are vastly insufficient for the lives we live
 We want God. We need God. We crave God.
 We want God *in* us...

Last week I heard a song that truly captured the depth of my desire
 It wasn't a hymn... or a praise song... or a spiritual...
 It was a Cole Porter tune written in 1936.

I've got you under my skin
 I've got you deep in the heart of me
 So deep in my heart that you're really a part of me
 I've got you under my skin

Here's my prayer for *all* of us this week.

I pray that we'll live well for the King,
 making him proud of us as we work hard in this world.
 I pray that we'll have the strength to stick it out over the long haul...
 not the grim strength of gritting our teeth...
 but the glory-strength that Christ the King gives all of us.

We look to King Jesus... and see the God who cannot be seen.
We look to King Jesus and see God's original purpose in everything.
For everything, absolutely everything,
above and below, visible and invisible,
rank after rank after rank of angels...
everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him.

Christ the King was supreme in the beginning and...
leading the resurrection parade
he is supreme in the end.
From beginning to end he's there,
towering far above everything, everyone.

This is our God... This is Christ the King...

And I pray that all of us will one day say
I've got you... under my skin.