

**St. Andrew's Episcopal Church**  
**Christ the King Sunday**  
**November 22, 2015**  
**The Rev. Barbara Hutchinson**

His feet betray him today. His secure stance deteriorates. The regularity and resolve of his rock-hard steps vanishes and his feet seem trapped to the floor. He shuffles from one corner of his massive office to another, dragging his feet, laid heavy with nervous energy, for something's going on that he knows he's not prepared for.

He lumbers to his seat of power, hoping this familiar bench will yield a resolve to flex again his arm of power, while trying to make sense out of this very strange and disconcerting story he heard yesterday of arrest, brutality, and then oddly, a reversal no one ever expected.

The shouts of the crowd outside clamor for his attention. The people hurl insults toward him; they shout slanderous remarks; their hands wave incessantly; while they demand to speak to him. They won't come inside with him, and he's taken off track, by needing to meet them where they are. That's not the way he usually does things, but these are the people with whom he does business. He scratches their backs and they scratch his. It's a good arrangement. It keeps order in the city and money in the coffers. As he grabs the folds of his royal robe tightly around his broad neck, he slogs his feet to meet their presence.

He knows instinctively they want blood. That's not a problem. He orders executions all the time. But now, because the city is swarming with pilgrims, he wonders if this is the right course of action. He dreads an uprising, a challenge to his power. "Not on my watch" his inner voice barks at him.

He turns his face toward the crowd, but side steps the pressing issue. He demands of them, "Why can't you deal with this? This has nothing to do with me!"

He swerves to miss their insults, he dodges their accusations, he moves around their demands, and shuffles back inside. His mind is confounded, confused, and chaotic. What is he to do?

He orders the guards to bring in the prisoner, and cannot believe what he sees before him: a bedraggled man, of small stature, wrists clasped in cuffs, pensive and petulant look in his eyes. He calls out to the God he doesn't believe in, and says, "Is this all you've got? "

He shuffles over, scuffing his feet on the cold marble floor, to take a closer look. Surely he's missing something. So he asks with disdain, "**You** are the king of the Jews?" For if this prisoner utters just one word about being a king, then it is treason,

and he can execute him, with a clear conscience, and the city will be at rest. He baits the prisoner on. Just say “yes” or “no”. Either is fine. Just be clear.

But wait, something happens: this man, this prisoner, this meek and lowly person standing before him, begins to talk rubbish about the location of a kingdom not here, and talking in circles and asking HIM questions. Jesus has flipped the script and Pilate’s mind is again confounded, confused, and chaotic.

Something is going on here that he is not at all prepared for.

Jesus, the King of the Jews, the Son of God, stands squarely before him, bearing all things, empowering all people, and says the only thing that needs to be said to change the world, I am the truth.

There is no shuffling about, there is no mincing of words, there is no dodging of the issue; there is no sidestepping of the truth: Jesus is Christ the King, the Lord of all creation, the Son of God, and our Savior.

Jesus stands squarely in this truth.

In John’s gospel, Jesus doesn’t point to the truth, Jesus doesn’t explain what the Kingdom is like, as in the parables of the other gospel writers. In John’s gospel, Jesus is the Kingdom, come near.

Jesus stands squarely in the truth that he is the revelation of God’s divine love and is the Lord of all.

For Jesus to be the King of all, we too must stand squarely in that truth. Part of that work is living as though it were true, even in the midst of our confounding, confusing, and chaotic world.

We are to choose the sweet fragrance of love  
over the poisonous stench of hatred;  
we are to take long strides toward the wide welcome offered to all on the cross,  
and we are to turn our backs against the narrow stance of closed doors and borders;  
we are to bear the balm of healing into our world,  
gathering and casting away the broken shards of abuse;  
we are to draw in the reign of justice with determination,  
and scatter the forces of oppression;  
we are to strain forward toward another kingdom where love is power,  
and turn away from a kingdom where power is loved.

For Jesus to be the King of all, we must stand squarely in that truth  
and live as though it is true.

Where it is that you stand squarely in that truth?

These can be simple and everyday occurrences, such as when someone tells you a racist joke, and you flatly respond that it's not funny; or it may be smiling and truly wanting to know how the check out person at Wal-Mart is doing today; it may be telling the truth in love to a family member, even though they may not want to hear it; it may be taking that last \$20 in your wallet and giving it to the hungry person you pass by on the street, without wondering if it's a scam or not; it may be attending a workshop on human trafficking in our area and deciding on the one thing you can do to ease the oppression of this multi-billion dollar industry. Each time we stand squarely in God's truth that all people are beloved children of God; we affirm that Christ is King.

And it may be that we're called to stand squarely in the truth of Christ the King, in some situations where it may feel more comfortable to dodge the issue, or shuffle past the problem and look the other way, or to drag our feet in action.

Let me give you an example of a situation a friend of mine told me about the other day to help you see where you would or could stand squarely –

So my friend recently moved to Newport, renting a home right downtown. Her daughter lives in Harrisburg and she and her granddaughter and granddaughter's friends come and visit her frequently. A month or so ago, she noticed her neighbors began flying a confederate flag from their front porch, directly across from her home. Every time my friend would drive into her own driveway, or check her mailbox or look out the window, there it was, a symbol to her of racism. So what is she to do? How is she to explain this to her granddaughter? Is she to ignore it and pretend she doesn't see it? Is she to fuss and fume about it but not say anything in fear of causing a disturbance? Is she to stand squarely in the truth of Christ the King and talk with her neighbors about her concerns?

These are tough questions to answer. Generally we know the right answer, but often find it really hard to stand squarely in the truth and look the problem in the eye and deal with it as Christ the King would.

It can be very easy to sidestep our commitments, to conveniently avoid uncomfortable truths, to poorly tend relationships, which need restoring.

It can be so easy to shuffle around life, without planting our feet firmly anywhere, without standing squarely in the place we should, in order to live as though Christ is King.

This morning, as you come forward to the altar, I invite you stand squarely there, whether upright or on your bended knee, and to eat and drink deeply of the holy nourishment so that you can live your life as if Christ is indeed the King. Amen.