



November 22nd, 2015 —

The Last Sunday After Pentecost: The Reign of Christ
2 Samuel 23:1-7; Psalm 132:1-13;
Revelation 1:4b-8; John 18:33-37

First Reading

A READING FROM THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, son of Jesse, the oracle of the man whom God exalted, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the favourite of the Strong One of Israel: The spirit of the Lord speaks through me, his word is upon my tongue. The God of Israel has spoken, the Rock of Israel has said to me: One who rules over people justly, ruling in the fear of God, is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land. Is not my house like this with

God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. Will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire? But the godless are all like thorns that are thrown away; for they cannot be picked up with the hand; to touch them one uses an iron bar or the shaft of a spear. And they are entirely consumed in fire on the spot.

2 SAMUEL 23:1-7

Psalm 132:1-13

- 1 Lord, remember David, * and all the hardships he endured;
- 2 How he swore an oath to the Lord * and vowed a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob:
- 3 "I will not come under the roof of my house, * nor climb up into my bed;
- 4 I will not allow my eyes to sleep, * nor let my eyelids slumber;
- 5 Until I find a place for the Lord, * a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob"
- 6 "The Ark! We heard it was in Ephratah; * we found it in the fields of Jearim.
- 7 Let us go to God's dwelling place; * let us fall upon our knees before his footstool."
- 8 Arise, O Lord, into your resting-place, * you and the ark of your strength.
- 9 Let your priests be clothed with righteousness; * let your faithful people sing with joy.
- 10 For your servant David's sake, * do not turn away the face of your anointed.
- 11 The Lord has sworn an oath to David; * in truth, he will not break it:
- 12 "A son, the fruit of your body * will I set upon your throne.
- 13 If your children keep my covenant and my testimonies that I shall teach them, * their children will sit upon your throne for evermore."

Gracious God, you have taught us in our Saviour Jesus Christ that you are present wherever there is love, and that two or three who gather in his name are citizens of your eternal city. Feed us with the bread of life, that we may grow to recognize in every human heart a sign of your presence and an opportunity to serve you. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Second Reading

A READING FROM THE REVELATION TO JOHN

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

REVELATION 1:4B-8

Gospel

The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to John

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

JOHN 18:33-37

"My kingdom is not from this world."

I have had a number of jobs in my lifetime. Therefore, I have had a number of office spaces.

The environments have differed, sometimes greatly — both interior and exterior. My favourite office spaces had views of waterways. My least favourite interior decor was a grayish toned green. It was chosen by consulting psychologists which claimed it was "most restful and calming". Indeed it was. If it weren't for the view out the big window along one side of the office, I would have been fired for drifting off to sleep!

The psychologists were working to create a new world of calm within our office building. It was indeed different than the world out on the street. It was indeed different than the world in the tan coloured offices on the floor above us. Like Kermit the frog, we were in our own sleepy green world — or kingdom if you please.

But that is only one of the many kingdoms in which we live. Like most of you, I live and have lived in many kingdoms. All but one of them has been of this world.

So what has been the exception? What possibly can be not of this world? All our information comes from earthly sources. Our possessions, food, technologies, our laws, our toys, our jobs, our medical care, our nations and so much more are all from earthly sources, including from one another.

We have our earth. We have the earth's creatures and plant life. We have its minerals, its land, its air, and its waters. As people, we are great innovators and inventors. But we can only do what we do with that which God provides us from the gift of this wonderful island home, the earth in which to live and grow. So aside from meteorites and the light of the sun, the moon and the stars, nothing comes into being from anywhere but our earth. Our learning mainly comes from our observations and those of others about earthly things.

Have you ever been on a tall building and looked down over the edge? The view can be spectacular! I may have told you about a man that I knew who had an office on the 33rd floor of a Toronto downtown office tower. I asked him if was difficult to get any work done with such a view from the window next to his desk. He replied that the view commanded his attention for about 2 weeks. After that, he said that he hardly noticed it.

One of the things I think a lot of people do notice in high buildings is the people going about their business on the sidewalks below. We notice first just how small they look to us — like little insects milling about. Now, just imagine the number of worlds in which they all find themselves living.

These might include:

- the worlds of their homes and its surroundings
- the worlds of their nations and municipalities
- the worlds of close friends and relatives
- the worlds of their workplaces
- the worlds of their professional or trade affiliations
- the worlds of their group activities and memberships
- and countless more “worlds”

But Jesus tells us of yet another world, another kingdom — another world set apart from what most of us experience in our everyday earthly worlds. Our Lord goes on to let Pilate and us know that he is the king of a kingdom not from this world, not of this earth. What is of great comfort to us is that Christ doesn't put up any barriers to prevent us from entering this kingdom of his. Instead, he invites us to come and share in that kingdom — to share in the other worldliness of the kingdom of God.

As followers of Christ and of that for which he stands, we will also find ourselves experiencing the kingdom of God in our lives. At the same time, as dwellers of the earth, we will continue to live in its many kingdoms. We are also to know that even as we share in the kingdom of God, we will find ourselves living among those who have not yet come to know of the kingdom.

So what are some of the things to notice as we share in the kingdom of God?

1. that we come to truly treasure in our hearts God and that which is of God
2. that we truly find ourselves loving God, loving our neighbour and loving ourselves; and that love influences the priorities in our lives
3. that we are sharers in the kingdom of God for the long haul — that we are not “fair weather only” followers of Christ our King
4. that even in our failures and with our faults, we are aware that we are called by God to know that there is always a time for a new beginning as we seek to move again in faith
5. the knowledge that Christ's love, forgiveness, and grace are always with us.

Yes, the above is other worldly. These are not earthly concepts! They seem naive at best to the cold logical mind. Just imagine trying to convince Pilate to grasp the ways of the kingdom of God!

In our present world, such a kingdom seems to be too far out for many to come to understand and we may wonder how we can encourage others to be brave enough to sample. Pilate and many others in our earthly world understand the ways of power, organization and systems. In many ways, they may likely be ruled by these. They also understand the returns potentially yielded from carefully placed violence and the threat of violence.

Alternatively the people of Christ's kingdom know the infinite power of love. Divine love can indeed do more through us than we can ask or imagine. We thank God that through Christ as king, we are invited to share in God's kingdom as we receive a taste of the wonder of what is to come.