

Sunday, November 25, 2018

Revelation 1:4-8

John 18:33-37

Who is this King of Glory?

Over 18 million people tuned in May 19 to watch the wedding of Prince Harry to American actress Meghan Markle. Commentators speculated as to why this wedding was viewed by so many in North America. Prince Harry is an active member of the royal family and Ms Markle is a woman whose appeal struck many people because she is a woman who lived a life as a commoner even though she was an actress and yet now she is married to a prince. Her whole life changed and she must live by the etiquette rules of the monarchy. Yet we are intrigued because she is now married to a grandson of Queen Elizabeth II. Many people follow the work and the lives of this royal family unfold. Beautiful jewels, tiaras, clothes, horse drawn carriages, parades and smiles all the time. It is something people dream of and wish for and according to many Disney princesses it is a life of responsibility and hope.

But this is not the only royal family in the world. King Phillippe of Belgium is also a reigning monarch and recently he took offense to the fast food giant Burger King. Burger King launched an online publicity campaign that asks users, "Who's the King?" and allows them to vote for who they want to be their king: a cartoonized version of Belgian King Philippe or the fictional Burger King. "Two kings, one single crown, who shall reign", asks the website. Unfortunately, the mock election caught the attention of the Belgian royal family and a spokesperson for the family noted its disapproval, stating that "since it is for commercial purposes, we would not have given our authorisation." It appears that the royal family agrees with Burger King on at least one thing-there can be only one king. But who is the King of glory?

Jesus is king of all kings and those who believe in his resurrection offer to him the praise and glory he so deserves. Yet we live our lives with the temptation to become better than we are, or even wanting more power, more prestige and even to become king or queen. Yet for the majority of people, becoming royalty is highly unlikely but yearning to be like the queen or king who does reign is often wondered about and even wished for.

Once upon a time, a stonecutter lived all alone. Though he had acquired great skills, he was very poor. He lived in a tiny bamboo hut and wore tattered clothing. One day as the stonecutter worked with his hammer and chisel upon a huge stone, he heard a crowd gathering along the streets. By their shouts he could tell that the king was coming to visit his humble village. Joining in the procession, the stonecutter gazed on as the king, dressed in marvelous silk, was greeted by his subjects.

In his heart he cried out, "Oh, how I wish I had the power and glory of the king, he thought. He has soldiers at his command. There is no one more powerful."

His cry was heard in the heavens, and immediately the humble stonecutter was transformed into a powerful king. He found himself riding on a great horse, waving at the crowds of people who had flocked to see him. This is power, he thought.

As the summer progressed, however, the new king watched the effects of the heat upon his people. Men and animals became weary, and plants withered under the powerful rays of the sun. As he looked at the sky, the new king realized that the sun was more powerful than any earthly ruler.

"How I wish I were as powerful as that," he thought. "I wish I were the sun. Immediately, his wish was granted."

The stonecutter relished his new role as the sun. He gloried in the power he felt as he surveyed the kingdoms below. As he sent his bright rays to earth, he watched kings and princes hide under their parasols; he watched as powerful warriors became weak under his gaze. Even the crops in the field were under his command.

Then one day a tiny cloud moved over the land, shielding the earth from the sun's bright rays. Seeing that here was something more powerful, he thought, "I want very much to be a cloud."

Again, his wish was granted. Now he blocked the sun's rays and felt important. He gathered all his strength, becoming a gigantic cloud, and began to pour down rain on the earth. Rivers formed where previously there were none, and water flooded the streets of the cities and the farmland. Everything—trees, animals, people—seemed to be awed by his power. Only the massive rocks were unswayed.

"There is nothing," he thought, "as powerful as a rock. How I wish I were a huge stone." His wish was granted. As a stone he remained motionless and powerful, unmoved by sun, wind, or rain. He felt exempt from all the forces that shaped the existence of those around him.

Then one day a man approached, carrying a bag. When he stopped, he pulled out a chisel and a hammer and began to chip away at the rock. Realizing that the man with the tools was more powerful than any rock, he cried out, "Oh, I want to be a stonecutter."

Once again the heavens heard his cry, and he became a stonecutter. Once again he lived in a bamboo hut and made his living with hammer and chisel. And he was content.

Each of us has been granted special gifts—how you define them and use them makes a difference. But are you willing to use them for betterment of this world and the coming kingdom?

Our world today is filled with many distractions vying for our attention at every second. We can easily allow our minds and hearts to be subjected to any number of things which might cause us to put

our focus to be on what might set us apart or separate from other people. Yet what is essential is that we are to remember God's commandment to have no other 'king' or idol or small g god. The reason being is that no one, no person can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other."

Today is Reign of Christ Sunday, the last Sunday of the church year before we start the church cycle all over again with Advent. Our scriptures today point us to Jesus as the One God promised to come to save the world, but who is also with God at the beginning and is with us now as His Spirit moves amongst us. Jesus is the one whom we will anticipate will come at Christmas, but who has already been here in human form about 2000 years ago. Yet who is Jesus, really? How do you relate to the One who is known as the King of the Jews, and the Alpha and Omega?

In John 18 Jesus is standing in front of Pilate in the palace of the Roman governor. Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus asked in return, "Is that your own idea or did others talk to you about me?" Jesus wanted to know where Pilate got his information about him. Pilate tells him, "It was your people and chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?" It is Jesus' response that really sets Pilate off on a tangent because Jesus answers with statements of his kingdom which is not of this world but from another place. Pilate states that he is a king. And Jesus agrees that he is a king but not like King Philippe or Queen Elizabeth is queen. Jesus is king because in the kingdom of God, Jesus rules along with the Creator/Father. In the kingdom of God, Jesus was there at the beginning and will be there for all time. Jesus then tells Pilate that this is the reason he was born—to be king of a kingdom not in the world as he knew it.

Pilate was unsure of what to do because Jesus was not planning on taking over Caesar's crown with his kingdom being from a different world. Pilate seemed torn- and so he asks what is truth? What was Pilate to know about Jesus? And what kingdom was Jesus referring to? As people of faith who believe in Jesus, the kingdom of God is the eternal dwelling place, the place where God lives and Christ will one day meet us, if we believe.

But in the meantime what are we to do? We are to worship the King, to tell others Jesus' story of love given through his death and resurrection and to sing his praises. Who is this king of glory? The king of glory is Jesus who was promised by God to enter into human history and become Emmanuel- God with us. While he lived on earth he healed people and taught them about the kingdom of God. He was then crucified and in this action took upon himself the sins of the world. But he rose again and is in heaven as his Spirit guides us in our lives.

Who is this king of glory? Jesus- Emmanuel God with Us; Alpha and Omega, and saviour, Christ messiah friend. Jesus is the one born in a stable, laid in a manger and later in death in a borrowed tomb. Jesus is the one whom God the Creator/ Father called beloved Son, and it is he who at his death caused the sky to grow dark. And it is Jesus who appeared to many people as the risen Christ. Jesus who reigns in heaven, the kingdom of God and whose Spirit is with us now.

But who is this Jesus to you? How do you relate to him/ his Spirit? Jesus rose from death and is the ruler of the kings of the earth. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, who is, was and who is to come. Almighty God. Thanks be to God.

PRAYER

Holy God of power and might we praise you for your gift to us in Jesus the one born human and who lived amongst to teach us the Way. We rejoice this day because Jesus will reign forevermore and will reign in our hearts if we believe. Move your Spirit amongst us and call us closer to you so that we might know your love. We ask these things because we believe in Jesus Christ the King. Amen.