

Sunday, November 24, 2019

Psalm 46 770 VU

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Luke 23:33-43

The King of Kings

Why are people intrigued by royalty and have been for many years? When we think of Disney we cannot help but name 12 official princesses which include Snow White, Cinderella, Merida, Pocahontas and Moana. But these of course are fictional stories of young women and their life changing experiences of either being born in a palace or becoming a princess through marriage. But what is it that intrigues us about watching what the Queen is doing or even any of her relatives? Often it is because we know that they live a life that is much different from ours where no matter where they go they are recognized for what they have done in the past or just who they are. Queen Elizabeth II is now in her 67th year of ruler Britain and she will probably not give up the throne. For as Reader's Digest writes, "On her 21st birthday, Queen Elizabeth II promised England she'd be their Queen for life. She stated: "I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong," And so we continue to watch her family children, grandchildren and great grandchildren grow older too.

But what is that intrigues us about kings and queens? We like to see how they live and go about their every day because their life and work is different from ours. Their homes and duties take them around the world to meet people where they are and when they do they express themselves in ways that show both courage and leadership. Courage to focus on current problems and leadership as they strive to bring about changes to these challenges. This is true of Queen Elizabeth and of course, Prince Charles, William and Harry. But we must still remember that they are human.

Our reading from the OT prophet Jeremiah talks about the fear that God's people had as they had been dispersed into exile. But God did not leave them alone in this time of struggle. To help ease their minds, God stated that there would be a Righteous Branch from the line of David who would be raised and he would reign as king and deal wisely with those who were unfair, unjust and cruelly lead them away from the homelands. Jeremiah stated that through him there would be justice and righteousness and there would be renewed hope. And this prophecy was fulfilled but not for many years. Yet the promise was made and the people trust God to fulfill it. Generations later, when Jesus was born those who remembered the promise knew of the righteous branch of Christ.

Jesus was born to become the King of kings- yet his humble beginnings don't reflect this. His parents were young and not from the elite group of leaders at that time. And he learned to be a carpenter in the community where he grew up as one of the boys. But Jesus also came to learn that he was different, set aside for a purpose and prayed earnestly about this- why him? Why this young man who was just as content to fix tools as he was teaching in the synagogue. Because he was not only human, but God's Son. And so when we think of Jesus he is both God and human, God made flesh, born of a woman, living a human life until such time when all was ready. And it was only when all things were ready that Jesus' life changed.

From the time he changed the water to wine at a wedding feast; healed a blind man with mud on his eyes, to the time when he was frustrated with his disciples for falling asleep as he prayed, Jesus was not just a carpenter. He revealed time and again that he was from above, God's Son, the promised One, the Messiah who came to seek and save those who were lost. Those who did not know God and needed to be reconciled with God in order to be forgiven of sin.

And it is this Jesus who entered Jerusalem with palms flying around him, not with loud bands and a huge parade of floats and excitement, but he was riding on a donkey into the city where he would soon die. It is this same Jesus whom God promised would save His faithful people and welcome those who confessed their sin within his kingdom.

But he was arrested for teaching against the established faith or as it was perceived he was, and this led to his crucifixion. And it is during those hours on the cross when Jesus is in heavy pain, that he prays to God saying, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." Yet he was also mocked and teased; the sign above his head read, "the King of the Jews" - a king crucified. The worst form of punishment for a human being- and Jesus the Son of God was subject to this. But even in these moments of pain, Jesus talks with the thieves on either side of him as they too prepare to die. One said, Save yourself and us—Are you not the messiah? But the other rebuked him and said, "Do you not fear God since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? We deserve to be here for what have done but this man did nothing wrong. This man speaking to Jesus pleaded, "Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom." this man believe that Jesus' kingdom was not of the earth, but in heaven. He believed and because of this belief, Jesus, still teaching even minutes away from death, "Today you will be with me in Paradise."

Jesus knew what lie ahead of him-paradise, heaven, being present with the Father—he knew what it was going to be like, because he came from there to live on earth!. Jesus had nothing to fear by dying, but he had fear not for himself- but for those whom he loved and who loved him which he left behind.

Jesus is above all human rulers- kings, queens, presidents, prime ministers, dictators and government leaders, and he enables us to know that there is hope for this world, because God in Christ rules over all. We just need to let people see Jesus for who he is. The one who saved us through his death and resurrection, but also the One upon whom sin was placed. And it is through God's grace- love and mercy that these sins are forgiven, that Jesus lives again and that we can look to Jesus as our King- above of all others. Above all. We put the big K in King for him because Jesus deserves this as he rules not for just a few years but forever. IF we believe in him we have nothing to fear. All we need to do is admit to God that we need Him to help us every day and to raise him up above all.

As we anticipate Advent and Christmas we will sing of the Newborn King for we know Jesus' story of humble birth and cruel death, yet we must realize that our hope all hope is in him. For God's plan was to have us live in paradise. Maybe just maybe if all believe that this is possible we can change the world. And we can do this because Jesus is our King of kings.

Let us sing with joy and praise God singing our hymn "JESUS SHALL REIGN!"