Sermons at Christ Church

Be One Body In Christ, belonging To Each Other.

Christ The King
The Reverend Emmanuel Ato Mercer

Everyone who belongs to the truth, listens to my voice. Jesus said. And the words we hear about that truth is that sets you free, free enough to be human, free enough to listen, free enough to experience the kingdom of God in your life. Free enough to walk the way of God because you have given yourself wholly to God.

There's a story of a young soldier-Dave, who went to war in defense of his country. On arrival from his little town to the army base, he made friends with another young soldier, Jake. They quickly bonded and became friends. After their basic training, they were shipped away to war. They fought alongside the other. One day, there was a heavy fight, Dave got hit. But as he lay dying, he pulled, with the last breath, the dog chain that hanged around his neck, and said this to Jake. "I need you to take this chain." He said. "Why?" Jake asked. "If you survive this war, promise me that you will go to my town and look for Miss Sanders. She was my Sunday School teacher. Give her this chain for me. And then tell her 'that all that she taught now makes sense to me." "I promise" He said, and then took the chain. Dave did not survive the war. He died.

Jake survived the war, and true to the promise he made, when he returned to the United States, he went to that small town and looked for Miss Sanders. When Jake found her, he told her "Dave in his dying moment, gave him his dog chain and asked me to bring it to you." Bemused Miss Sanders asked "But for what?" Jake responded "He said that all you taught in Sunday School now made sense." Miss Sanders screamed "But he didn't even pay attention in Sunday School."

Indeed, Dave may not have paid attention, but he just may have heard these words from Revelations, Jesus loved us and freed us from our sins, that Jesus is Lord and king over all of our lives, and that even at the worst moments of our lives, he still reigns supreme over the circumstances of our lives. He may have heard that Jesus' kingship is a kingdom over hearts that choose to embrace the truth that sets us free, it is a kingdom of hearts transformed by goodness and so yearns for all hearts to be transformed by that same goodness.

The gospel story recounts a dialogue between Jesus and Pilate, who reminds Jesus that he isn't a Jew, and that his own people who believed in their ultimate truth had delivered him.

Yes, you are right, Jesus said. But my kingdom isn't from this world that is why he doesn't command an army. The kind of kingdom he sought and seeks to build is one that does not have an army, possesses no weapons of war nor is it violent. The kingdom does not seek to subdue others through violence, it is one that goes against the grain, one that turns the weapons of war into ploughshares, it is a kingdom that uses the instruments of war to create spaces of dignity, comfort and peace. It is a kingdom that transforms-offering hope to the hopeless, healing to the sick, release to the prisoner and sight to the blind. It is a kingdom that sets you free to be human-one created a little lower than the angels and yet is supposed to walk in the way of God.

Jesus was too powerless to withstand Roman brutality. But the weapons of war, which was the mouthpiece of the state, could not subdue nor break him. They killed him but they could not silence the voice which spoke the truth about human freedom, the kind of freedom which frees you from sin and makes it possible for you to experience the kingdom of God within you.

There was something unique about the life of Jesus Christ, that even his detractors, could at least acknowledge in private. They knew he lived the way of God.

Jesus used his life and ministry as a testimony against his accusers-and the kingdom he talked about was one that thrived on the hope of human possibilities, of what can be. It is a kingdom that turns the world inside out, bringing out the best that is in each one of us. The best which is in you is the God who yearns to be free to manifest the glory in you. Give God the chance to use you!!

Today's gospel story doesn't go far enough to capture the question Pilate asked Jesus in response to his thoughts about truth. "What is truth?" Pilate asked. Pilate's question expresses our own despair over what the truth is. We are engaged in the business of asking the same question-what is truth? The problem is those who believe they have the answer, seek to impose their version on others.

But the reality is that we may be in bondage if we refer to our truth, especially as regards religion or any ideology, as the truth. Religion, ideology and politics may generate deep emotions and passions but it should not claim to have truth, what it should claim is a way of life that frees and yet honors the God who is the way of life.

John is his gospel assures us that the truth Jesus spoke about "I am the truth" was not a doctrine, but a way of life. It is a way of life that seeks to establish God's kingdom in our lives and in all broken places. The only truth to which I can bear witness to is the presence of God in you-which in fact makes it possible for you to make the kingdom of God come alive in you.

The truth about Christ is that God Himself is present in each of us as an undistorted unadulterated reality. Jesus came to bear witness to this truth. He was not the truth because his teachings were true, but his teachings are true because they express the truth of God as a way of life-and that each of us can walk that way.

Think about it, the Jewish authorities found in Jesus the kind of authenticity that they lacked. They knew he was more than his words, and he was more than any word said about him. They could not stand him and so handed him over to Pilate with charges of blasphemy.

Remember this, the strength of a religion, ideology or anyone of us lies in their ability to renounce power. That is why it makes sense for Jesus to claim that his kingdom is not of this world, because his kingdom is not about power. We are accustomed to power, we love power for the sake of its ability to control others. But Jesus separates the kingdom of this world from his kingdom, for his kingdom is made manifest in the vision that John portrays to us in Revelation, it is not of war, or violence, nor is it about the domination of the other. It is as Daniel reveals, a kingdom, where all nations and peoples and languages will participate because within each citizen is the truth of God's presence. Jesus offers us an alternative to the precarious nature of a world lost in its pursuit of a truth it already possesses.

Think about our baptism for a moment, we are not baptized into an ideology, but into a truth which is a way of life. We reach that truth by living it, by making Jesus' being her own being. The truth which liberates all people is the truth in which we can all participate; because it is a part of us, and we a part of it-the truth abides in us because we abide in it. True discipleship then is when we are able to participate in the life of the truth which sets you free to be human-free from yourself, free enough to be compassionate, free enough to be forgiving, free enough to be gracious, free enough to be welcoming, free enough to be grateful and rich in God. Free enough to lift people up. Free enough to bring healing to the broken places of life. Free enough to work for the kingdom of God. Free enough to live the way of God because God is in you.

Jesus had no empire, nor an army, he simply offered a different example of how to believe, think and live. His was a peaceable kingdom where the truth which liberates is the power of love, for God is love.

Today, we celebrate Christ as king because you have chosen to have him reign as king in your life and world. You have chosen to live the way of God. Today, I invite you to give yourself to Christ, allow Christ to be your Lord and Savior-Give yourself to him. Honor Christ with your whole self.

Like Dave, feel free enough to tell the Jakes and the Miss Sanders of our world that all you have heard now makes sense. Amen.