

Twenty fifth Sunday after Trinity
13 November 2016
Cathedral Church of the Epiphany, Columbia, SC
Fr. Zachary Braddock

This Sunday is an interesting one. Technically, if you look at the calendar it doesn't exist. The short version of the story is that Easter was early, and so we get an extra Sunday between The All Saint's octave and the Sunday Before Advent. It's a good time to tie Christ the King, All Saints, and Advent together. And although there is no way today was foreseen when the Prayer Book was compiled, by God's providence we have this convergence today.

So we had an election last week. I think most of us are glad that this election cycle is over. I know I am. It's not because I don't like the democratic process, it's not because I'm apathetic about the whole thing. If you know me, you know I am anything but apathetic about things like this.

I know that some of you supported one candidate. Some of you supported the other. Some of you didn't support either. This is not the forum for a discussion of their merits. But we should all keep in mind the teachings of the Church on earthly rulers. The psalmist writes, "Put not your trust in princes...in whom there is no

help.”¹ He writes also, “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes”²

Remember that the psalms have traditionally been attributed to King David, a man who certainly knew the folly of princes and kingship of God over his own Kingship. Even the way in which David became King points to this.

“The Israelites wanted a King. They wanted to be like the nations; wanted to be subjects of a mighty earthly king, who would lead them into battle and rule over them. God allowed them a king. But the Kings of Israel, such as they were, could never be the King that Israel needed. There could only be one. No one who lived to see Saul, David, Solomon, or Josiah would live to see the King of Kings. But he did come. He came in a manner no one expected, and to do what no one expected. The child was born in Bethlehem and grew and was hung on the cross, under a sign bearing the inscription, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. It was meant to be a convicting epitaph, and yet it rang out with a truth that few who witnessed it could believe in the moment, if any did. In time, they would believe, once Jesus had

¹ Psalm 146:3

² Psalm 118:8-9

risen from the dead, once death had been trampled down by death, and the oldest prophecy in scripture fulfilled.”³

Regardless of how you voted, or didn't vote, regardless of how you feel about the President-Elect (and as an American, I feel you should have an opinion on these matters)remember that if you are a Christian, you are first and foremost a subject of the Kingdom of God, and only secondly a citizen or subject of any earthly power. The writer Stanley Hauerwas once wrote a whole book on this, called *Resident Aliens*, where he makes the argument for the oft repeated saying, “in the world, but not of it.” Hauerwas didn't come up with this idea, of course. It goes all the way back to St. Augustine, writing in the fourth century about the fall of Rome and the differences between the city of Earth and the City of God. It goes back even farther than that, to when our Lord instructed, “render unto caesar that which is Caesar’s; render unto God that which is God’s.”

Remember that the State can never replace Christ the King or His Holy Church. Not the Holy Roman Empire. Not the Realm of England, nor the British Empire, The French Republic, the Third Reich, the Soviet Union, nor any other government which could be conceived by man, even the United States of America.

³ This paragraph taken from another sermon, Feast of St. Matthias, 2015.

No matter how good, or how bad, any earthly government may be, it is temporal. Christ the King will one day establish his Kingdom on Earth, and he will wipe away all those flags which hang in the back of the church. Christ the King will subdue all nations, and principalities and powers, and not only those which have oppressive governments but our own as well. The British will have no more need of the Queen of England, and we will have no more need of a republic. Those forms of government will have no place in the Kingdom ruled by Jesus. He will be an absolute monarch, ruling a Kingdom of justice and peace. Jesus Christ our King will be all in all, he will be the lamb at the center of the kingdom, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords.

Do not mistake me to mean you should be apathetic towards politics and our civic life. By no means do I mean that. But our first loyalty is to Christ, to His Church, to His Kingdom. When you were baptized, you became a member of the Church and a subject of Christ. You were joined through that water into the Household of God, which is not just that parish you were baptized into, nor this one, but the entire company of the saints, all those throughout time and space who worship the Son of God.

So, be involved. Vote. Write editorials. Learn the rules and history of our civic life. Fight to make our country a better place. If more people were involved, perhaps it would be a better place.

But bear in mind, too, that as a Christian, it is your responsibility to feed the hungry. To clothe the naked. To shelter the homeless. To visit the widow and the orphan.

As a Christian, it is your responsibility to uphold the church's teaching on the sanctity of life, from beginning to end. It is your responsibility to uphold the church's teaching on marriage. It is your responsibility to preach the gospel, not with words only, but with act and deed.

Jesus Christ is coming. Do you feel it getting cold outside? Have you seen the holiday decorations going up in the stores? The music might already be on the radio- I just haven't heard it yet. Advent is almost here. Our Gospel reading is a warning. False Christs will arrive. They've been here for a while. But the Son of Man is coming with power and great glory. As Habakkuk tells us, he will come and will not tarry.

Soon we will begin to prepare for the coming of the King. Soon we will call on Emmanuel to come and to ransom Israel, both looking back to the people enslaved in Egypt, and forward to the time when God will fully establish his earthly Kingdom. I know I've said it before, but Salvation does not arrive on Air Force One. Salvation arrives in a little wooden stable full of straw, and on a wooden cross. That, my friends is true power. That is true kingship.

Praised be Jesus Christ, true God and true man.