**Sunday, November 22nd, 2020**

**Ecclesiastes 1:1-11**

Today is Christ the King Sunday.

Next Sunday, the first Sunday of Advent begins the new Church year,

          as we prepare for the celebration of the birth of Jesus.

But today we remember and honor the King, our King, Jesus Christ.

The thief on the cross amazingly recognized Jesus as King when few others did:

         “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.”

The throne of Jesus is the cross, his royal crown is made from sharp thorns,

          his royal robe is the nakedness of human flesh.

Yet, along with the thief, he claims us, as he gave us his promise:

“Today, you will be with me in Paradise.”

This King presented himself as teacher, and as servant to us all.

As we live our lives here on earth, with all the pain, doubt, confusion, and grief,

          we are also living within the Kingdom of Christ the King.

His Kingship in our lives provides us with the strength and courage to live,

          and follow him here on earth, until we arrive fully in his Kingdom.

It is interesting that the Thanksgiving holiday

          always falls so closely to Christ the King Sunday.

Together both these celebrations emphasize each other.

Gratitude comes from having the right perspective.

It is being able to look at what we have and being thankful for everything,

          rather than longing for what we do not have.

As we remember we have a King who did so much for us,

          and has given us so much, we can truly celebrate Thanksgiving.

We ought to feel grateful.

          We are a part of God's plan.

                    We are touched by God's love, forgiveness, and tenderness.

                              What greater blessing could there be?

As we look at the kindness of God, the faithfulness of God,

          and the goodness of God,

                    how can we not be filled with gratitude and thanksgiving?

This is a time to remember God, to remember who is in control.

We take the time to remember his goodness in the past;

          to remember God's closeness in the present;

                    and to remember his power for the future.

It is a time to remember Christ as our King.

It is a time to offer him our thanks and praise.

The book of Ecclesiastes comes as a fortunate choice for this time of year.

The author, believed to be Solomon, was unlimited in what he could do.

          Unbridled in what he could own.

                    Unharnessed in what he could experience.

So he set out to do it all.

He tried knowledge, pleasure, possessions, and projects.

He was serious about each one.

He built a temple and a palace.

He owned forty thousand horses with twelve thousand horsemen.

He married the daughter of Pharaoh and built her a house –

          which was good because he had six hundred and ninety-nine more wives so his

place was crowded.

In spite of it all, or because of it all, he was restless.

"I hated life", he wrote.

He was isolated, frustrated, and longed for the good old days,

          when things were simpler, and the wine was sweeter.

For some reason, Solomon kept a record of his longings.

          And somehow, they became public.

Perhaps he knew that he was not the only one to get to the top of the ladder

          only to find it against the wrong building.

Haven't we felt that way?

          Either we could not get what we wanted,

                    or we did get it, but it really was not satisfying.

We tend to frantically build sandcastles.

          But the next wave is coming.

                    There is no escaping it.

                              And all we have worked for is swept away.

The writer of Ecclesiastes wanted to help those who would live after him

          lead a fulfilling life.

And so, he taught lessons learned from his own life.

All his struggles to gain wealth, possessions, and knowledge,

          brought him no satisfaction or happiness.

All the pleasure, success, riches cannot make us happy.

Seeking God, and encountering his presence with us,

          is more important than money, pleasure, work, or anything else in life.

God is here in our world now.

          He has been all the time. He calls: Come to me.

                    It is time for us to do what he asks.

                              It is time to trust him, live his way.

Without God all our work, pleasure, and wisdom are useless.

Lasting fulfillment comes from honoring God in all we do, and trusting Him.

We are not in control.

God is.

And we ought to offer Him unending thanks that He is.

Ecclesiastes strikes a responsive chord in our age.

Its words show up in folk songs and at presidential inaugurations.

No century has seen such progress, and yet such despair.

What is the purpose of life anyway?

It there any ultimate meaning?

"Is that all there is?" asked one songwriter after listing life's pleasures.

If we live on that level, we may conclude that life is meaningless.

Even the Teacher, a man who possessed brilliant powers

          of wisdom and observation,

                    had to conclude some things are beyond understanding.

All we can do is: trust God and obey him, no matter how things seem to us.

Ecclesiastes gives some words of hope including the final summary:

          Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter:

          Fear God, and keep his commandments;

                    for that is the duty of everyone.

For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing,

          whether it is good or evil.

God sees the big picture.

We do not.

                    Life is like a jigsaw puzzle.

                              Each piece has its proper place.

                                        And every piece is important.

We get confused and frustrated because we cannot see the big picture.

We live in a world that is out of our control.

But we have a God who

          watches over us, loves us, and will never leave us.

This is more than enough to offer him thanks and praise each day of our lives.

AMEN