

Lectionary B November 22, 2015 Christ the King Sunday
Grace and Peace Lutheran Church, Evansville, Indiana
Pastor Roberta Meyer

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14
Psalm 93
Revelation 1:4b-8
John 18:33-37

Thy Kingdom Come

We buried Harry's ashes Friday morning in the Augustana United Church of Christ cemetery out amongst the rolling countryside just north of our farm. It was a graveside funeral of sorts. The mourners consisted of Dave, his brother, Jim, the undertaker, and me.

He was buried in his father's grave. Jim said he always talked fondly of the times he went fishing with his dad. So he knew that is where Harry would like to be, that is except for a few ashes Jim reserved to scatter out in the woods on our farm.

I knew Harry as a crotchety old codger. He was foul mouthed and opinionated and very set in his ways. He and I didn't get along too well. It went back to one day when he was smoking and dropping his ashes in my new gazebo, that Dave was just putting the finishing touches on. I asked Harry to please not smoke in my gazebo. (Anyway that's the way I remember it)

Harry said a few gruff words that I can't repeat here and walked off. That was the end of him hanging around our place, at least when I was around.

Even with that Harry now and then would show up at my back door with a sack of produce he had grown, tomatoes, zucchini, and one year he had eggplant growing out of his ears! Mostly, he hung out up the hill at Jim's house. Every morning he would drive to the farm to get the newspaper and catch Jim and Dave up on the latest town gossip.

Harry always said he came back to Indiana to die. That was seventeen years ago. He grew up in Dubois County. He had been a farmhand for the Meyers at one point. That is how he got to know them. They were his friends—and more than that, in the end, they were the only family he had, Jim and Dave, that is. He had been married out west where he worked as an electrician and had a daughter. He also had two brothers, two sisters, and a granddaughter. Jim contacted them when Harry became ill, but they didn't care much. When he died on August 23rd, no one came or called or anything. The funeral home held his ashes until Friday morning when we finally put Harry to rest.

It was a brisk morning. The frost was just melting under the bright sunny skies. We read Psalm 121: *I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come?* Just seemed appropriate for the setting. And we prayed: *Our Father who art in heaven...Thy kingdom come...*

Thy kingdom come... What does that mean and where was that kingdom as far as Harry is concerned?

Jesus bumfuzzled Pilate talking about this kingdom. *"My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here."*

Pilate was confused. "Are you a king or not?"

Jesus didn't help his confusion. *"You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."*

So Pilate's rhetorical question as he walked off to wash his hands of this weird Jew was, *"What is truth?"*

The truth is Jesus and Pilate were talking about two completely different things. Pilate, like most of us, considered a kingdom to be a territory to be ruled and defended by a king. And the king will use any power, and if need be, violence, to keep what he has, or increase it.

Jesus came to bring us a different Kingdom. *"Thy Kingdom come..."* How does a kingdom, come anyway? A chunk of land stays put. It is where it is. People come to it. But Jesus was telling Pilate about a kingdom that is "out of this world." Jesus' kingdom doesn't operate through violence. There was no fighting to keep Jesus from being handed over. The only weapon that defends Jesus' kingdom is love. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son..."* And Jesus came to show us that is the only thing that really saves us. Love.

Pilate didn't want anything to do with Jesus and his kingdom, but as it turned out, Pilate had a huge part in bringing Jesus' kingdom within our reach. Jesus' love took him to the cross and brought Jesus' kingdom to you and I and to Harry.

In our Revelations text we read, *"To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."*

The truth is Jesus' kingdom has nothing to do with a place, it's not a somewhere. Jesus kingdom has to do with relationship. Did you hear what the Revelation text said? He made us to be a kingdom! We are Jesus' kingdom!

A piece of God's kingdom is embedded deep in the hearts of each one of Jesus' children. Through us Jesus' kingdom comes into the world through our love and service to each other.

And let's read what our job is again. *"[Jesus] made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father..."* It is our calling to bring about glimpses of "thy kingdom come" as we look forward to the promise of God's kingdom coming.

Where is Jesus' Kingdom?

It is anywhere we connect with others, in our conversations, our struggles, our joys.

For Harry, Jesus' kingdom came to him through Dave and Jim. Their tears Friday morning were the anointing oil poured out on his grave and ushered him home where he now lives with Love.

Last Tuesday at the Mission of Grace Meal, a woman approached the gals taking care of the clothing table. She had bruises on her arms, and she was wearing a bandana on her head. She is a victim of domestic violence. She was beaten and a chunk of her hair had been whacked up. Did we know anyone who could cut her hair and make it look ok for free? Just so happened that there was a beautician in the room, a member of Fresh Air—and she was more than happy to help the woman.

Thy Kingdom Come.

A gay man comes into church and slinks into the back pew. He wants community with Jesus' people. He wants to be respected for who he is without judgement. Does this church mean it when they say, "All are welcome?" He is greeted with genuine love.

Thy Kingdom Come.

Several times this year I have had the honor of sitting with families and their dying loved ones. It is a sacred time, walking a person home. And it's not about finding the right thing to say. There are no "right" things to say when a loved one is dying. The only thing that makes sense is the physical presence of someone who cares.

Thy Kingdom Come.

I know we all felt Jesus' Kingdom yesterday. From the songs of our precious children to the choir's jubilant rejoicing, to Brenda's words and the bishop's authority and the sanctuary filled with family and friends. Several people told me they felt the Spirit moving and stirring up something special. And it is all because of our relationships with God and with each other. It was the connecting of our spirits to God's Spirit that made this place rock.

Thy Kingdom Come.

I could go on and on. I know you are thinking of times when Jesus' presence felt so close, you could almost reach out and touch him. Jesus' Kingdom comes when we touch each other.

Ron Young over the last few weeks before the ordination kept teasing me calling it a coronation. At first I argued with him, but when you stop to think about it. Maybe there is some truth to it. We are a royal priesthood. I think our coronation actually happens at our baptism, when we are made new in Christ's kingdom. We become children of the King.

Yesterday was a coronation celebration not just for me, but for all of us as we promised to support each other and join together as Kingdom heirs to serve God in ways we could never dream possible.

We don't get to know the direction Jesus is taking us with this Kingdom stuff. Like I heard "someone" say yesterday. We can make plans, and that is good. However, God's Kingdom is uncontrollable. We don't get to figure it out. We don't get to put limits on God's Love. We are not Kingdom police. No, our job is to love God and each other... and hold on to our crowns as we follow God's love, because Jesus' Kingdom is "out of this world."

Amen.

