



Devotional Word

from Pastor Paul Hoffman

Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

Advent Mid-week Worship

December 5, 2018

This, this is Christ the King

Philippians 2:5-11

Maybe we expect too much. Or maybe we're looking for something that isn't really there; was never intended to be.

"A king," the carol says. "This, this is Christ the king..." Do we picture a crown? A castle? Maybe we're looking for something that isn't really there; was never intended to be.

For sure, this king, this manger-based king for which Advent encourages us to prepare is probably NOT the king of our expectations. Because, according to St. Paul in his letter to the Philippians, who was no doubt quoting an early Christian hymn, our king Jesus...

emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

Not much a king, certainly not a ruler, a "winner." Maybe we expect too much. Maybe we're looking for something that isn't really there; was never intended to be.

Sometimes we're slow learners. Sometimes we expect too much. Let's start at the beginning –

How could we have gotten it wrong when this "king" was sleeping on the lap of a peasant girl? When he was lauded not by royalty, but by shepherds and angels? When he was bedded down in mean estate where ox and ass were feeding?

How did we get from THERE to the expectations of a king that – let's face it – looks in our mind's eye more like the king of England? Or Denmark? Or Amazon, Bank of America, or the 12th Man?

And now we've turned the corner to the very point of this King. This King Jesus. He did not come to reign over all that is good and powerful and strong in our world. He did not come to ratify our 21st Century post-modern, post-industrial revolution, post-whenever we actually ARE in the world these

days... He did not come to ratify all that. This, this Christ the King whom shepherds guard and angels sing is a different sort of king. A king who,

though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

This, this is Christ OUR king. The babe. The Son of Mary.

Don't tell anyone, but more often than my musician friends would like me to admit, I listen to country Western music. In 1999, Bobby Lee released a song called "Lookin' for Love in All the Wrong Places." I bet you've heard it.

It could also be said of us that we've been looking for Jesus in all the wrong places. We look for him in the way we'd look for an earthly king. In power. In order. In things that go right. In our own versions of success stories. We look for him in all the good stuff. Which, truth be told, is usually all the stuff that suits me, or you. All that stuff that supports our version of the world.

But this, this is Christ the King. Whom shepherds guard and angels sing.

So it's more likely that the Jesus for whom we wait, and watch – the Jesus for whom we long – is going to be found on the shadow side of life rather in the bright and shining lights. Among the poor, next to the sick and the dying. Consoling us in our failures rather than congratulating us on what we perceive to be our successes.

This king who sleeps on the lap of an unwed peasant girl and was fostered by a lowly carpenter is more likely to be found in the ICU than on Wall Street. He regularly shows up in an Imagine Housing house, and is just as regularly pushed out of the House of Representatives. He lives among us in our lowest moments, but we often give thanks for him only in our greatest hour.

Maybe we expect too much. Or maybe we're looking for something that isn't really there; was never intended to be.

This, this is Christ the King. The babe, the Son of Mary. This is our King and he loves us and all that he created, from the bottom, up. From our darkness to his light. From our unavoidable death to his abundant life.

In the name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.