



ST ALBANS

Crash Helmets

The Rev. Simone Hurkmans

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“It is madness to wear straw hats and velvet to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping God may wake someday and take offence, or the waking God may draw us out to where we can never return.” This is a quote by American author Annie Dillard from her book *Teaching a Stone to Talk*. We should all be wearing crash helmets. We need life preservers and signal flares. And yet here we all are, maybe not in velvet and straw hats, but we get the idea.

This Sunday we're wearing white because it's a feast day. It's Reign of Christ Sunday, or sometimes it's called Christ the King. Reign of Christ is a relatively new feast day, by church standards. It was only made a feast day after WWI, in 1925. Pope Pius XI felt that people were too wrapped up in the kingdom of the world, rather than the kingdom of God. Robyn shared with us earlier this week that she had read on Anglican twitter that it was as a response to the fascist political movements of the day.

The kingdom of God. It's the main thing that Jesus preached about. He talked about it over and over again in the gospels. Think about the parables. The kingdom of God is like... (a mustard seed, a treasure in a field, a pearl, a man sowing seed, etc.) When Jesus' disciples didn't get it, then came the explanations. He spent so much time talking about the kingdom of God.

Paul, on the other hand, hardly ever talks about the kingdom. He's much more about rules, about how to live, about what to do and what not to do. It's very odd, isn't it? Why didn't Paul focus on the kingdom? This is an excellent biblical studies question, and we could go down that path this morning. But you know what an even better question is? Here it comes, always taking us down the harder path. A better question is: are our lives based more on the teachings of Jesus, or on the teachings of Paul? How about the church's life? How is it organized? How about this particular church right here at King Edward and Daly?



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The Reign of Christ purposely falls today, the last Sunday of the Christian year. We begin a new year next Sunday on the first Sunday of Advent. The Reign of Christ ends our liturgical year by reminding us to reprioritize. To remind us that Christ is at the centre of life. That God sent God's self to our planet 2,000 years ago in the human being known as Jesus of Nazareth. The Reign of Christ reminds us to remember that the point of life is to bring about the kingdom of God on earth. It's not the number 42, by the way. And bringing about the kingdom of God on earth doesn't just happen once, but again and again and again. This is why crash helmets are required. It's a dangerous mission we're entrusted with.

So what does it look like? What does bringing about the kingdom of God on earth look like? What would be different if we acknowledged the Reign of Christ in our lives every day?

That's where the readings come in. We've got the reading from Second Samuel first, the last words of King David. Did you know that the alternative reading for today is from the book of Daniel, a prophet. There's a description of one who comes to save. An all-powerful, fiery God who is like a human being, coming from the clouds. It was written much before the coming of Jesus of course and in a time of severe oppression of the Jewish people under Babylonian captivity. In that context it makes sense that the prophet Daniel would write about an all-powerful fiery God who would come to make things right. When we as Christians read the First Testament, we read it through the lens of the resurrection. We read Daniel as a foretelling of Jesus who is to come. The one who comes to make things right. Living knowing this is living in trust. Trusting that the bottom will not fall out when things go terribly wrong. That's the kingdom of God. Trusting that God will be there, always.

We've got the reading from Revelation. I am the Alpha and the Omega. That God was, is, and will be. Forever. Bigger than ourselves, bigger than our family, our friends, our country, our planet. Living knowing this puts things in perspective. That our daily struggles are just that. Daily struggles. The rapper Shad says in his great song Rose Garden: "the rain falls whether you're Gandhi or you're Adolf, so make the call, no rain delay, play ball". PAUSE. Acknowledge your daily struggles, and



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then help others with theirs. Small things like listening to a friend, or big things like fighting to end oppression. That's the kingdom of God.

In the Gospel Pilate confronts Jesus with the question on everyone's mind: "are you Christ the king?" Who are you? Who is Jesus to us? The word Christ is derived from the Greek Christos and means Messiah. The anointed one. Marked with oil in a special way. Kings and priests were anointed. Set apart for a special purpose. So when Christians say Jesus is the Christ, we mean he is the one set apart. He is anointed by God for a special purpose. He is God in human form. Come to earth in a certain time and place to show us the way. To teach. To heal. To forgive. To show us death does not have the final word. Living following Jesus' example, teaching, healing, forgiving, having hope. That's the kingdom of God. Amen.

Question for Open Space: Are our lives based more on the teachings of Jesus, or of Paul's? How about our community's life?