

SERMON: 2018/11/25 (27th Sunday aft. Pentecost, Yr. B - Track 1) - 2 Samuel 23:1-7; Psalm 132:1-19; Revelation 1:4b-8 & John 18:33-37

[Invite children to the front. Have four, large cards: 'Friend', 'Brother', 'Teacher', & 'King']

Jesus says that "My kingdom is not from this world."
What did He mean by that?, I wonder.

Well, firstly, it reveals to us, *implicitly*, that Jesus is a king, right?
Elsewhere He calls Himself our 'friend' [Mt. 11:19, 26:50; Lk. 5:20, 7:34].
And even says He's our 'brother': [Mk. 3:35].
He was also known as 'teacher' (or "Rabbi"): [e.g. Mk. 4:38].
And those are really, *really* important things to always keep in mind about how we should think about Jesus and the kind of relationship that we have with Him.
But that's not all!

There's another "dimension" to all this,
and that's that Jesus is someone who gives us new *commands* [ref. Jn. 13:34]
- He can tell us what to do and how to behave, and we should listen because He is a "king."
'King of kings'(!), in fact: [e.g. Rev. 17:14].

Secondly, because Jesus' 'kingdom' isn't like normal, earthly kingdoms, it doesn't operate the same way: it doesn't try and force us to do anything - it might have rules, but there are no police or "hall-monitors" - although mums and dads and priests will try and help, and so it is up to each one of us to *choose* to listen and to obey to Jesus-the-King.
That's our role, our *responsibility*.
To be good "*choosers*."

Let's pray: Father God, ..., in Jesus' name, amen.

[Ask children to leave.]

The End of the World.
Half of (the book of) *Revelation* is about it.
Many of the prophecies in the Old Testament too.
King David refers to it in 2 Samuel, and, momentarily, in this morning's Psalm.
And - I've said it before, *recently*, even - prophecy and prediction, visions of "beasts" and "angels" can seem not just irrelevant but far-fetched and

nonsensical.

Incongruous with "the daily grind."

Out-of-touch.

Mad even.

Modern society has little patience for those who hear voices and see ghosts, and so we're ill-disposed to *any* such talk, even in the inspired Scriptures.

Of course, the world as we know it *is* ending - it is *always* ending; finished.

Apocalypse - "Armageddon" - is happening *every* moment; every minute and with each breath.

Deaths.

Redundancies.

Divorces.

Moving home.

Being "dumped."

Graduating from school.

The end of this ecclesial year (of which this is the last Sunday).

All of these events are the end of a "world" - a *little* world as we knew it.

Some of them can seem over-whelming; *catastrophic*.

They can leave us reeling and wounded; wondering how we will ever recover or, "move on."

And indeed, when we're feeling hurt or vulnerable, when carefully laid plans unravel, or our cherished hopes fail to materialise, we might very well question the *sanity* of faith; of religious belief; of church-membership; of pledging or attending worship.

We might think to ourselves, "Why bother?"

"What am I even gaining?"

"Am I better off without Jesus in my life?"

"Does He even make a difference?"

And it is very true that there is much chaos about which He *seems* to be doing nothing significant: take those wild-fires in California, or that shooting at the Pennsylvanian synagogue, or the Saudis' savage bombing of Yemen.

Why doesn't He *appear* to respond?

Pilate asks Jesus, *implicitly*, this very question in John's gospel: Saying to Him, essentially, "If you're the 'King of the Jews', why don't you fight back?"

And the question isn't a ridiculous one: that's what ancient kings *principally* were - *war-lords*; warriors.

Their position was tightly connected to their *control*; their influence of some body, some cohort of soldiers who were willing to kill and brutalise in their name.

Consider Saul or David; or Julius Caesar or Alexander the Great.

And Jesus confirms this is the case, referring, obliquely, to 'my followers', who are

'not from this world': [Jn. 18:36].

Revelation describes them *vividly*, and so, as you would expect, these "followers" have armour and weapons and even ride horses; they wear 'breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur' - yellow: [Rev. 9:17].

And, like their captain, Christ, they are not idle; but doing something actively even at this very moment: chapter 7 - 'After this I saw [the angels] standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind could blow on earth or sea or against any tree. I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to damage earth and sea, saying, "Do not damage the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads.'" [v.1-3]

The 'four winds' are the "winds" of the displeasure - the heartache or "wrath" [see: Mt. 3:7; Lk. 3:7, 21:23; Jn. 3:36; Rom 1:18, 2:5, etc.] - of God, which, we're told, in the New Testament is already 'at hand'; [Mt. 26:46] that is to say, falling upon us as I speak; here among us.

- Which is why Jesus' *first* words in *Mark* - the gospel we've spent *all* this year exploring - are, 'The time is fulfilled...repent, and believe...' [1:14-15]

Because, as He explains in more detail in *John*, "'Now is the judgment of this world, now the ruler of this world will be driven out.'" [12:31]

That "ruler," of course, are 'the cosmic powers of...darkness' which are unique to 'this present'; [Eph. 6:12]; our [human] "condition."

And the angels are 'holding back' the full and final reckoning for our sake; for the sake of 'the servants of...God', which is the Church - being protected to carry out the mission of bringing in the lost, as many as possible, to satisfy the expansive love of the Creator, who desires that 'all should be saved.' (That's *1 Timothy 2*, verse 4.)

In the way of an analogy, it might help to sum all this up with an analogy: imagine that you make a toy for yourself. It's beautiful but fragile, liable to cracking. And then you choose, out of pure generosity, to share that thing with a friend of yours, who's careless with it. He treats it roughly and even breaks it badly. But, because you're a patient person, you don't immediately snatch it back. You like to see your friend's enjoyment; their pleasure with the toy that you made gives you pleasure. But who is the real owner? You or them? Who is really in control of this situation? Who is 'the king' [Jn. 18:37] of the fragile toy?

Let's take a moment to reflect.

