



Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost (C)

The Feast of Christ the King

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

November 24, 2019

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† May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our Strength and Redeemers. Amen.

I recently came across a political commentary that used a phrase I hadn't heard in quite some time. That phrase was, "The art of the possible". I decided to remind myself of the origin of the phrase, and I do think that it might have relevance for us today. Here's what I found:

"The original phrase is 'Politics is the art of the possible'" and was spoken by Otto Von Bismarck, a Prussian King in 1867. (<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/424187-politics-is-the-art-of-the-possible-the-attainable>) A commentator said that it basically means, "It's not about what's right or what's best. It's about what you can actually get done". It's associated with... a political philosophy of setting pragmatism over ideological goals", and challenges one to "compromise...." He goes on to say that "refusing to compromise means you get nothing whatsoever...." (Joshua Engels at <https://www.quora.com/What-does-the-phrase-the-art-of-the-possible-mean>) So, we might ask what on earth does this have to do with us today.

Today, we might say that "The Church is the art of the possible". The Church is people who hope and dream together. We come together to celebrate, to pray, to learn and to trust that the journey of life to which we are called as Christians is life-giving for us and others. As Episcopalians, we are not bound to rigid rules, doctrines and dogmas. Our way is classically known as the "middle way", allowing a diversity of beliefs while holding to many traditions some two thousand years old.

At St. Mark's, we exist to assist with what we call the Spiritual Life. Everything we do is to foster that spiritual life in worship and in all our ministries. We do 'what we do' for the sake of the Gospel and to sustain us in our response to the call to be disciples of Jesus.

We might say that stewardship in the Church, the giving our ourselves and our gifts, is part of the "art of the possible'. As we continue our Stewardship Season, *Shining Our Light*, we give thanks for the gifts we have received and those we hope and need to receive towards our life together in 2020.

Stewardship is about giving. It is also about compromise. It involves giving for something greater than ourselves. It is about looking at our financial resources in proportion to what we might give for the sake of God's ministry at St. Mark's.

Today, we celebrate another aspect of God's ministry among us. Today, we celebrate Christ as King and more importantly, the Reign of Christ in our hearts and in our life together. That reign has much to do with forgiveness and reconciliation.

Today's Gospel reminds us that even on the Cross, Jesus modelled forgiveness: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing". As he faced crucifixion, the forgiving and reconciling heart of Jesus remained. His was not the heart of a monarch on high, but the heart of a gentle shepherd caring for and loving his sheep.

Today, we *could* call attention to the window above the High Altar and what it might symbolize, as the central image is of Christ as a monarch or King. Or, we could think about the possibility of what it might mean for us to allow Jesus to reign in our hearts. What might it mean to allow Jesus to reign so concretely in our hearts that we are transformed and become his agents in the world?

God so reigned in the heart of Jesus that his heart was one with that of the Creator. Today, we celebrate what that heart might mean for us as followers of Jesus in today's world. We celebrate Jesus who in reality was humble and honest in life.

The theologian, Fr. Richard Rohr, tells us that "The only people who grow in truth are those who are humble and honest... Without those two qualities—humility and honesty—we just don't grow... Humility and honesty are really the same thing." (<https://cac.org/humility-and-honesty-2016-09-08/>) I would venture to say that Jesus was and is the epitome of 'humility and honesty', traits which enabled others and enable us to want to embrace and emulate.

In today's Letter to the Colossians, Paul tells us, "May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from Christ's glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience..." He goes on to say, "God has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins." (Colossians 1:11-20) More traits of Jesus: Strength, endurance, patience, redemption and forgiveness!

Jesus endured the Cross with patience and humility through a loving and forgiving heart. Are we not called to do the same? Are we not called to love and forgive others as we are loved and forgiven by God? No small task, and we need God's grace to make that happen.

Today, we find ourselves at the conclusion of the liturgical year, as we stand on the threshold of a new liturgical year. Next Sunday, The First Sunday of Advent, we will begin again the cycle of the liturgical seasons. Like a new year in the calendar, we will have a fresh start to our journey with Jesus and with one another. I invite you to come and begin the New Year here as a follower of Jesus!

In the rhythm of the liturgical seasons, today is a celebration of Jesus, his life, his love, his commitment to us and his reign now and for all eternity. It is a celebration of the outpouring of God's love for humanity in the person of Jesus. As we approach Thanksgiving, we have much for which to be thankful especially for Jesus who reigns in our hearts and who calls us to follow him.

What does it mean to follow Jesus in today's world? It means to sacrifice ourselves, our time, our talents and resources, in order to give to others so that they and we might have life in abundance. It means to assess life, and if needed, to make changes in order to become a better person, a more kind, honest, loving and generous person. It means to forgive others, as we are forgiven by God. It means to allow God to actively transform us into the 'Beloved of God' in Jesus. Sometimes, that means compromise, letting go of *our* expectations, so that our hearts can beat one with the heart of Jesus.

Join with me today in thanking God for the gift of Jesus. Through the power of the Spirit, Jesus reigns in our hearts, reshapes and molds us into his way of love. It is he who calls us to shine our light so brightly that others may experience his light today and every day. Amen.