

The Truth that Belongs with Passover
Reign of Christ 2018 - St. Andrew's Anglican Church

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I speak with you in the presence of God and the beloved people of God. Amen.

On Thursday morning I got a text from a friend travelling in the southern United States. He is a professed atheist and on this trip he met a man who moved him deeply. He met Mo, also in his early 30s, who had converted to Christianity and was seeking asylum. In his home country of Jordan, converting to Christianity meant death and Mo's family had already disowned him. It's one of those moments when we in the West realize just how much faith can cost; just how much pledging your life and heart to Christ can ask. As Mo told his story, he said that his conversion began when he started to read the bible. He began to read and as he read he discovered love.

This morning is the Feast of the Reign of Christ and its really quite new in life of the church. The Roman Catholics instituted it in 1925, the same year that Hitler published Mein Kampf, Mussolini dissolved Italian parliament to become its dictator and the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism was formed.

Between the Great Wars a Feast was made to proclaim Christ as the Ruler of all and in so doing proclaim a very different kind of kingdom and very different kind of King. A kingdom that had already come yet was still being born in our space and time, a kingdom and a ruler so deeply different than the ones that surrounded people then and surrounded us now. This Feast Day found its way into the Anglican Church with the BAS in 1985 and it is our New Years Eve. This is the last Sunday of the Church year and so we find the culmination of our whole liturgical year and life as we gather today in the presence of Christ the Alpha and Omega- the beginning and the end - of all that we are all that we do.

At Bible study this week one of the questions was why this gospel reading on this Feast Day. Of all the marvelous, joyful texts about the Kingdom of God, why this one? Why the gospel we normally hear on Good Friday?

Precisely because of what Mo discovered when he read the story of Jesus. Precisely because the heart and paradox of our faith is this God who chooses to die; whose power is made perfect in weakness, who shows us a way and a world that doesn't-as some translators put it- grow naturally here but is meant for us and to grow within us. As Jesus stands before Pilate, the Creator of the world is on trial by an earthly judge, the King of All accused of political treason, yet John writes his narrative in such away that very soon the whole word is actually on trial. To Pilate's final question 'what is truth?' Jesus does not reply leaving both space and silence for us to find ourselves looking Truth in the face. Space and silence to realize that Truth is none of the subjective opinions that brought Jesus to this place but God's response

which is nothing less than God himself. N.T. Wright puts it this way:

" Ah but this is truth. The truth that belongs with Passover. The truth that says one man dies and the others go free....Somehow through the cynicism, the causal local custom, the misunderstandings, the distortions, the plots and schemes and betrayals and denials, the Truth stands there in person taking the death that would otherwise have fallen on [Barabbas]. Pilate didn't see it at the time. Even cunning Caiaphas didn't appreciate the irony of the point. But John wants us to see it. This is what the cross will mean, this is what the truth is and does. Truth is what Jesus is and does; and Jesus is dying for Barabbas, and for Israel, and for the world....And for you and for me." (John for Everyone, pgs 111-112.)

This love is Truth, this God has authority over us and is the kind of authority and truth that sets us free, bring life out of death no matter what comes. As MO discovered, when you meet this God and this love there is nothing other to do than to follow, no matter how much it costs. As John wrote: "What has come into being in [Christ] is life and that life is the light of world. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out". Christ came into the world for this and sends his followers as living evidence of the community God is building, a community of humility, justice, self-giving and peace, a new creation we say, an embodiment of the Light that shines in darkness.

So as we celebrate our church New Years Eve it's the chance to ask ourselves some "searching questions", as Brother Tristram writes, about the year that went before: "during this past year whom have I served, through my words, thoughts, and deeds? To whom have I paid allegiance?" How has my life, the little everyday everythings revealed the God's kingdom?

As we sang in our Taize piece this morning, let our prayer for today and the entire year to come be "Come Lord and open in us the gates of your Kingdom."

Amen.