**Christ the King, Nov 25 2012, Rev. 1: 4b-8; John 18: 33-37, The Rev. Mary S. Trainor**

What did you talk about at your Thanksgiving dinner this past Thursday? On Thursday, I read a column in USA Today on this subject entitled, "**Put Religion and Politics on your Thanksgiving menu."** Aren't these **the** two subjects that are intentionally always avoided at such gatherings, because they result in arguments? Oh yes. But, the columnist reasoned that religion and politics are really interesting to talk about - we just need to discuss them in a non-confrontational manner; for example, instead of saying "Where do you go to church?" ask "**Who is God to you?"** Indeed, who God is a really important question, and it is addressed in today's Scriptures. Maybe you did not discuss this question at your Thanksgiving dinner this past week, but it is a question each of us must answer.

Maybe, at your Thanksgiving dinner, you talked about deer hunting or football. You might not think of these as controversial subjects, but they can be! Back in 1976, country songwriter Paul Craft related football to the question of, "Who is God to me?" when he wrote the song called, "Dropkick Me, Jesus." Singer Bobbie Bare recorded it, and you can listen to it on *YouTube*; it's got a good two-step beat, with lyrics that seem a bit cute but are serious. It goes like this: "**Drop kick me Jesus through the goal posts of life, end over end neither left or the right, straight through the heart of those glorious uprights. Make me, oh make me, Lord more than I am. Make me a piece in your master game plan, Free from the earthly temptation below. I’ve got the will, Lord if you’ve got the toe. Drop kick me Jesus through the goalposts of life.**"

Today is the last Sunday of the Church year, when we celebrate the feast day of Christ the King. It's bigger than the Packers in the Super Bowl. It's the culmination of the church year, which ends in victory. Our reading from Revelation today captures this by telling us that **Jesus is,** ***"the ruler of the kings of the earth...who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom...who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*** Victory, indeed! Today, the identity of Jesus Christ as King and Lord is celebrated. We struggle relating to this king thing, because we are thinking about governments with kings. In the Gospel, Jesus clarifies this by saying, "***my kingdom is not from this world."*** God's kingdom is eternal, the same yesterday, today, and forever; but earthly kingdoms have leaders, boundaries and rules that change all the time. Kings of this world love to have power to lead great armies and control great treasuries; Jesus, the King of Kings, has power that is all about love.

Pilate's mind was focused on worldly kings when he asked Jesus, "***Are you the King of the Jews***?" This scene took place the night before Jesus was crucified. Pilate was cross examining Jesus, who was accused of treason (of not being loyal to Caesar). Yet in His response Jesus turns the tables back onto Pilate! Pilate was an ambitious but weak man who was doing the minimum of what was expected of him by the Roman Empire - he was not looking to have to commit about what he believed about God! But when he (and we) stand before Jesus, that is what is expected. But, Pilate is non-committal. Does this sound familiar or what? We are in a society of non-commitment; we just want to hang out and hang loose -- keep our options open, have one foot here and the other foot there.

In the malls around here this past Friday, there was a lot of commitment making going on: commitment to get the best deals. This day, "Black Friday," is rapidly becoming a significant one on our American calendars: It turns out the "Black Friday" name originated in Philadelphia in 1961, where it was used to describe the heavy shopping traffic on this day when retail stores turned a profit (go into "the black" from "the red"). We don't seem to have trouble making **the** kind of commitment to finding good deals, and our having intense commitments to this has caused some horror stories over the years. In 2008, an employee was trampled to death in a Wal-Mart on Black Friday. Last year, soon after the Target in a West Virginia town opened at mid-night with its black Friday sales, a 61-year-old shopper named Walter Vance collapsed and fell down to the floor of the store. Witnesses later reported that the nearby shoppers stepped over his body heading for the good deals. Vance died a few hours later in the hospital. What is going on here?

Those people who stepped over Vance were not bad people - they were just focused on one thing. Pilate was focused on one thing too: getting his next promotion in the Roman Empire hierarchy. We all are capable of getting swept up in the moment, in excitement about something. But, when we do, we can lose sight of the most important thing in our lives: our relationship with God. The bible calls this being *doubleminded* (James 1: 8), and we are pretty accomplished at functioning in this way. You know, doing church on Sunday and then living our lives with God in the back seat (instead of in the driver's seat) the rest of the week. Our zeal to find deals (or whatever else we are preoccupied with) causes us to miss out on the best deal ever: making a commitment to the One who is responsible for all that we have and all that we are is free! Our culture seems to encourage us to worship the god of materialism and competition, and put our Lord in a distant second place. But when we commit to live with Christ the King in the driver's seat, we gain joy, peace, direction, and power. Pastor Tony Campolo, in his book Seven Deadly Sins, said this, “**Joy in Christ requires a commitment. Salvation comes as a gift, but the joy of salvation demands disciplined action. Most Christians I know have just enough of the Gospel to make them miserable, but not enough to make them joyful. They know enough to keep them from doing the things which the world tempts them to do; but they do not have enough of a commitment to God to do those things through which they might experience the fullness of His joy.”** So, make that commitment today: ask Jesus to be Lord of your life, live with God as your priority. Have God rule you when you are losing, as well as when you are winning; when you are shopping and when you are working; when you are grieving, and when you are triumphant; when you are up and when you are down. Let us pray together the collect for today found on the front of your bulletin insert: **Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**