

My sermon was largely done before the apparent outcome of the election was known. I knew my sermon would be pretty much the same whether or not we knew the outcome and no matter who won. I knew that if the candidate I voted for won, there would be no gloating. We have been so battered this year and gloating will not help us heal.

By the same token, I have prayed all week to resist despair if the outcome was not what I hoped for. We are in God's hands and despair is a tool of the devil.

Whoever you voted for, and whatever you think about the projected results, we are reminded today that we ultimately answer to a different ruler. God can work through presidents and the government to care for the creation God loves, but regardless which party is in power, they will still be affected by human sin. They will rule imperfectly.

I've seen a fair number of social media posts and comments that say no matter who wins Jesus is king. I've said it, too. Our reading from Luke's gospel today says it as well.

It's true. But let's talk a little bit more about the experience of kings in ancient Israel and how this led to us being able to say Jesus is king...and what it means for us.

Last week we talked about the judges. The period of the judges was mostly disastrous and chaotic for Israel. Most of the judges were corrupt. War was nearly incessant. And everyone did what was right in their own eyes rather than living as God wanted them too.

The people of Israel decided what they needed was a king. In their minds, a monarchy could give them a strong central government that would protect them and unite them and end their struggles.

There are a couple of problems with this. First and foremost, Israel was supposed to be structured so that God was their ruler. Asking for a human king was a slap in the face to God.

The prophet Samuel was God's messenger at that time so they put their request for a king to him.

Samuel warned them that kings would not be the cure all they were hoping for. Here's what he told them:

"These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots.¹² And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots.¹³ He will take your daughters to

be perfumers and cooks and bakers. ¹⁴ He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards. He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards ¹⁶ He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men^a and your donkeys, and put them to his work. ¹⁷ He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. ¹⁸ And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day."

But the people weren't swayed. They still wanted a king. God granted them their desire. Saul was the first king. Saul turned out to be unfaithful and was removed by God – through David. David would be the second king. David was a great military leader. He did end the incessant warring. He brought a measure of peace and prosperity.

But he misused his power by making Bathsheba, a woman married to another man, his own. When she became pregnant, he conspired to kill her husband Uriah as a cover up. Although he repented, his misdeed created a family system that became violent and tragic.

Most of David's sons ended up dead, often at the hands of a brother. One of his daughters was raped by her half-brother.

But for all that went wrong, God stuck by David's kingship. David was flawed, but he was also faithful to God. It's the mutual faithfulness between God and David that resulted in God's promise...the promise that one of David's descendants would always occupy the throne in Israel.

Over the next 500 or so years, Samuel's warnings about kings would come true. They were almost all corrupt, too. They were times of considerable prosperity and for a while, even peace for Israel. But the kings were largely self-serving. The rich exploited the poor. Worship of other gods, often to cement relationships between Israel and other nations, was rampant.

Corruption ultimately led to their own conquest and exile. Even after the exile, they were an occupied nation. God's promise to David seemed to have died.

The people longed for God to send another king...a better one. A savior. We'll talk more about that as we explore the prophets over the next several weeks.

Well, as we know...God went one better than sending a better king. God himself came in the person of Jesus to rule over all creation.

The promise God made to David extends throughout the age and into our time as Jesus assumes the throne. And now it's not just Israel's throne, but the throne of all creation.

Jesus is king...lord...of all.

As Christians, we are subjects first and foremost in the reign of Christ. As subjects, we have been given a vital role in this realm. We have a call to love God, love one another, and love our neighbor as ourselves. That will mean very specific things in the aftermath of the election. But in general that call is the same as it was before the election.

Our call is to model the Jesus way of life. As subjects of Christ's reign, we are to do the things that he taught. That has always been the call of the church and always will be. We are called to love one another, love our neighbors as ourselves, love even our enemies.

That call has never been more important.

Maybe right now you are wondering what that should look like. What work in Jesus' realm are you specifically called to? What will love your neighbor look like to you?

We all have things we are passionate about. That can be a clue for you. Is there an issue you feel strongly about? Your passion may be God's way of calling you. Commit to learning more about it. Learn about it from perspectives other than your own.

But it's always worth remembering that people can passionately support evil things, and that we are all vulnerable to rationalizing our own worst instincts.

So maybe the first thing we should do is commit to knowing Jesus better. Knowing the things he taught...what his ministry looked like. Spend time with Jesus in prayer. Pick one of the gospels and commit to reading it through. We're in Luke this year – it's a good one to start with.

As a teaser, remember that the way Jesus assumed the throne wasn't through conquest or brilliant persuasive argument. Jesus assumed the throne through a cross.

And he calls us to take up a cross. That means at a minimum, we are called to give up something of our own ego and arrogance.

For some of us, our call will be to work on some of the big issues facing our nation, even if it just means writing to elected representatives.

Those issues are still there...a pandemic, racism, sexism, unsustainable economic inequality, a health care system that doesn't work well for large segments of our population, poverty, finding ways to care for pregnant women and the unborn, climate change and so on.

For all of us, our call is to love in our little corner of the world. We're called to love the relative or neighbor who didn't vote the way we did. We recognize that sometimes means calling out hateful or hurtful speech.

We're called to provide for our families and raise our kids to be good people.

We're called to be the loving aunts, uncles, or grandparents that enrich the lives of children. We're called to do our jobs to the best of our ability, and to fight injustices we see in our own workplaces, schools, and communities.

We're called to do our part to try to control the pandemic and care for the environment.

Our call to love will always be the same, no matter who is president. We do so because Christ first loved us.

Jesus is king...and he reigns in a kingdom of love.