Christ the King: that’s a lot jazzier name for this Sunday than the alternative, the Last Sunday after Pentecost. Whatever we call it, clearly the theme of this day *is* Christ the King, evident from the outset with the Collect in which we pray for the restoration of *all things* under the reign of the King of kings.

The language of monarchy strikes an odd note on American ears, but we do get it: this is about the primacy of God as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. It’s another reminder—and we need as many as we can get—that we are not ultimately in charge of things. We get to play a large role in how things go in the world—that’s sometimes good news, sometimes bad—but a simple backward glance at our own lives is usually sufficient to confirm the fact that we do not have the last word in how our plans turn out. Even our best-laid plans, as Robert Burns said.

It strikes me that God’s kingship or dominion is not the only point being made here. In looking at a website from the church in New Zealand I came across a comparison of today’s Collect with a prayer for mission in Daily Morning Prayer:

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the
earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those
who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.

In his *Commentary on the American Prayer Book*, Marion Hatchet notes that this prayer for mission was written by George Edward Lynch Cotton, Bishop of Calcutta, India, from 1850 to 1866. It was included in the 1892 BCP in this original form:

O God, who hast made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and didst send thy blessed Son to preach peace to them that are afar off and to them that are nigh: Grant that all the peoples of this land may feel after thee and find thee. And hasten, O heavenly Father, the fulfillment of thy promise to pour out thy Sprit upon all flesh; through Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

All of this points to the restoration of God’s loving creation as God made it. That biblical account of the Fall in the garden of Eden is an attempt to explain why we humans have such difficulty living in peace with each other. It’s rather puzzling, to say the least. We have such a hard time just leaving each other alone in the best sense of that phrase.

Instead we seem hell-bent on trying to get what someone else has or trying to hold onto what’s ours when someone else needs it more than we do. We seem driven by fear and envy, pride and greed. That’s the source of the wailing in Revelation, I suppose—the recognition that we are so driven by this lust for power and possessions that we have treated each other—the other “tribes” in the language of today’s text, those with whom we share one blood—in the shameful way portrayed in that apocalyptic scene.

The point is not that we should feel awful—that kind of guilt can quickly become an end in itself, a distraction from both our mission as God’s children and the good news we celebrate today.

Pilate, a big shot in a backwater of the Roman empire (big fish in small pond), recognized that he couldn’t change this human trait, this intolerance of one tribe for members of another. Indeed he was dealing with a quarrel within one tribe—sub-tribes among the Jews, if you will. At least he had convinced himself he couldn’t, so he told the clamoring crowd, right after his interview with Jesus, “You take care of this. I wash my hands of the whole affair” (as if that were possible: here we are still reading about it two thousand years later).

What a strange kind this is, he must have thought—for he was someone keenly aware of kings and their doings. King of the truth? What’s that? He even asked the question directly of Jesus right after what we’ve read. The question is barely offstage in this reading from John, the very next verse: “What is truth?”

Well, there we go, or, more accurately, here it comes again, those first words of the Collect: “restore all things.” What things? The prayer for mission tells us the basic truth, the original state God intends to restore: “You have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth.”

Not one kind of blood here, another there, according to the worth of this person or that group, but one blood coursing through all our veins.

Focusing on Christ the King this morning is saying, “When it’s all said and done . . .” because this Church year is now all said and done: we are all God’s children, all brothers and sisters. We pause and reflect on that truth and its implications for how we live our lives as individuals and as members of this one global, beyond-global, family, as members of each other, submitting ourselves to the loving Creator of us all. The creator of all things.

And then, because we still need reminding, even after the journey of this year, particularly *this* year, we begin again next Sunday, trusting in this loving God and Creator who has made us all.

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