

“By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high
will break upon us.” AMEN!

The dawn from on high will break upon us...

Many of you know that our family's
annual thanksgiving tradition
includes a reunion of sort on
the east coast of Florida.

We've done it for years but
we have not always gathered
in the same building.

The first 10 years or so was in a condo
right on the beach.

It gave the luxury of view and lavishness of sound.

The vast Atlantic view and
the sound of waves crashing.

One of my favorite things was
rise early in the morning
before the sun came up in order
to watch the dawn break on high.

The sense of oneness,
both being large (on the balcony)
and small, at the same time,
with the order of nature unfolding
before the eye along with the quiet -

except for the rhythmic sound of waves
or the occasional bird.

Something about it was exceptional and
in my 20's (long ago!)

the only way I could think to honor the moment
was to record it on the 8 millimeter video
camera that was given to us
for a wedding gift in 1992.

Who knows how much time is on
those video cassettes of sunrise after sunrise?

I still have the tapes, of course, but
do I plug them in and watch them?

The sunrises I carefully recorded?

No, not once. :-)

For they'd pale in comparison to the real thing.

They'd pale in comparison to the tranquility of
the dawn breaking and balance of
creation's artwork unfolding without
the work of human hand.

It's mindful to note that the ability
granted to me is not one that everybody in
the world can afford.

In the same way that many of the abilities
granted to each of you are not
the same ones others in
the world can afford.

One of these abilities is sight
something many of us take for granted. (Pause)

Our ministry minute speaker today is Jeanette Sickel.

Jeanette grew up in Jackson, Mississippi in
the Lutheran church there and
she went to school at Georgia Tech
when it was called North Avenue
Trade School and became

a member at Redeemer Lutheran Church
on Peachtree Street.

Jeanette has 3 children, all grown and not local.

She is retired from the
Florida Public Service Commission
where she worked with professionals
who were blind and then felt compelled
to confront the need to improve
vision services in Georgia.

She's led to be involved in the advocacy
project for the visually impaired.

Please welcome Jeanette for her Ministry Minute.

So, on this Christ the King Sunday, we look first
to what we do when we come to
this realization that we have abilities
that others don't?

We have many powers that others don't have.

Should we feel shame? Pride? Lucky?

None of these help us move in healthy ways.

No, let's just be mindful with acknowledging its truth.

Acknowledging what we have, and
the luxuries we can afford, and be sure
that we don't make them, or ourselves,

king or queen. (Mmm)

One of my favorite quotes from
the “Spider-Man” movies is this:

With great power comes great responsibility.

The quote is attributed to the wise, Uncle Ben.

See, he was giving advice to the young Peter Parker
as he came to grips with his newfound powers
and what those powers meant
not only for him but for others.

There is also similar wisdom in Jesus’ parable of
the Faithful Servant from Luke’s gospel
chapter 12:48.

There we read, “From everyone to whom much
is given, much will be required;
and from the one to whom much is
entrusted, even more will be demanded.”

Too many leaders, achieve power and influence
then deny the responsibility that comes with it
to care and support others.

With great power comes great responsibility.

Some of us have a little and some of us have a lot.

So, on this Christ the King Sunday, we must
look at what we need to be reminded of
when we think about kingship or queenship
and what it means to have power,
even if it is just a little. (Pause)

This day is celebrated not because
Jesus called Himself king.

It was created about 100 years ago
by Pope Pius in response to
the growing secularism and
ultra-nationalism in Europe.

Pope Pius instituted Christ the King Sunday as
a form of protest to address the ways people
were making their leaders into false gods
and their nations into idols of worship.

Individuals rising to power for themselves and
people putting them there to hurt people
different from them.

Sound familiar?

Calling Christ the King is our own
act of resistance,

resistance to someone (or something),
in our lives being king.

Proclaiming with hope how Christ
reigns over our words and our actions,
over our lives and our deaths,
really over everything.

Christ is the King. (Pause)

In today's gospel, we have Luke's unique
scene of Jesus in conversation with
two criminals we find another example
of God's power revealed.

But before we do, we do well in noticing
what the people did with their power.

The text said the the people, with
the power of the masses,
simply stood there watching.

The leaders, with their power
to promote or deny justice.

They had vocal power to proclaim righteousness,
but the author tells us they used
their voices to scoff, instead.

And finally, there were the soldiers, people
who wielded power with weapon and
training elected to not use them for
gathering but stood aside and mocked.

Each group spoke to an aspect of king-ship,
until the scene narrows even closer
with only Jesus and the two criminals
in the spotlight.

With Christ on the cross, sandwiched
between these two, Luke makes clear
the purpose of the gospel and
God's upside down view of
power/authority/autonomy.

Here is the message that salvation
really means something.

What is it?

Life after death? Yes,
but it's not only that, right?

Is it about forgiveness? Yes,
but it's not only that, right?

Salvation comes to us, and others, in ways
that draw us to find that it is very much

about speech and action.

Finding we are all interrelated by webs of power
and influence and therefore
have a responsibility.

A great responsibility... to proclaim, as Jesus did,
that those on the bottom of society find liberation
and live into it;

that the blind have it and know their great value;
that the wandering sheep are gathered
and included into the fold.

And that we let our breath be taken away
by the beauty of sunrises and
the dawn breaking on high to live a life
so that others might experience
paradise, too.

AMEN!