

Christ the King Sunday, November 23, 2008, Liturgical Year "A"

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA, NY

The Rev. Fr. Arthur W. Ward, Jr. + Rector

"His Kingdom Come"

IT'S ALL ABOUT YOUR WORLDVIEW

During the recent presidential election between Senators Obama and McCain (aren't you glad that's over?) Senator McCain made the remark that the difference between Barak Obama's approach to leadership and his approach is a difference in worldviews. It was the first time I heard a presidential candidate speak in those terms, and I am glad he did. What's a worldview? Simply put – it is how you view and understand our world – really life itself. McCain got to the heart of the matter. He contended that he viewed that government was not the solution to our problems and should be small, while Obama believed that "bigger" government could solve our nation's problems. While that may be an oversimplification of their approach to governing, it still raises an important point – how we view the world affects how we see other people and how we act and certainly how we live.

For example, the worldview of a communist would be that we are merely material beings and that the community as a whole is more important than the rights of the individual and everything is viewed in economic terms with the goal of establishing a utopia on earth. The worldview of an evolutionist would be that we are the product of random chance over time and that there is nothing more to life than what can be scientifically observed. The worldview of a hedonist would be to view pleasure as the highest goal in life. The worldview of a follower of Eastern religion would include reincarnation and the goal of becoming one with the universe. The worldview of a Moslem would be that we are all dependant upon Allah and the teachings of his prophet Mohammed.

CHRIST'S WORLDVIEW

But what was Jesus' worldview? That should be the question? What was Christ's worldview? As His disciples it is imperative that Christ's worldview be our worldview. The problem is there is a lot of misunderstanding in the Church today concerning what actually was the Lord's worldview. Some would say it is primarily about love, others about social and economic justice, still others that Jesus, although the highest way, is really one of many ways in understanding God. But what did Jesus actually teach? What was the overarching theme of His ministry?

The answer can be found in one phrase: The Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of heaven. With Jesus it was always about God's Kingdom. Jesus began His ministry with these words: "***Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand.***" He taught in parables usually beginning "***the Kingdom of Heaven is like...***" and He taught His disciples to pray, "***Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come.***" In other words, the first thing we are to pray for after recognizing who God is, is to pray for His Kingdom to come.

But even more importantly, He revealed to His disciples and then to the world that He in fact is the King of this Kingdom. He is Lord of all. And there is no other. Look for a moment at **Rev. 19:11-16**: "***And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war... And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called the Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth***

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comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “King of kings and Lord of lords.”

When you see Jesus you see the King of kings and Lord of lords. When you hear Jesus, you hear the King of kings and Lord of lords and when you trust Jesus you are trusting in the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Today, is Christ the King Sunday; the last Sunday of the church year. We end the church year by remembering that Christ indeed is the King. And so in our remaining time together, I want to briefly look at how we can make sure that our worldview reflects the Kingdom of God .

THE KINGDOM HAS COME

The first priority? You have to know the King. In **Jn. 3:6**, Jesus said to Nicodemus, one of the leading Pharisees, *“Unless you are born again you cannot enter the Kingdom of God.”* And Jesus later said to His disciples on the night before He died, *“I must go away, and I will send you another Comforter to be with you always.”* When we accept Jesus as Lord, we receive the Holy Spirit. But then we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit on a daily basis. **Eph. 5:18** says, *“Do not get drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit.”*

We are filled with the Holy Spirit a number of ways. Chief among them is to read, learn and apply the Word of God. In this world, we grow accustomed to trusting our family, our friends, our leaders, and all the important elements of life. But all of these will let us down at one time or another. Nothing is totally reliable in life except one thing. The Bible says that there is only one thing that will not let us down, one thing that will not fail, one thing that will abide forever – the Word of God. **Isaiah 40:7-8**: *“All flesh is grass, and all it’s loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers and the flower fades...but the word of our God stands forever.”*

Jesus said in **Mk. 13:31**, *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Word shall never pass away.”*

Reading and studying the Word of God is the foundation to growing in Christ, and I believe something supernatural happens when we read, meditate on it and study it. **Hebrews 4:12** says *“The Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”* Don’t let Satan keep you from getting into the word even if it is only for five minutes a day.

What is the foundation for a Christian worldview? the Word of God. What is the foundation for creation itself? the Word of God. What is the foundation for the Kingdom of Heaven? The Word of God.

And when we get into the Word it’s not just to be a reading exercise or a time to get facts, it is a time to come to it with humility, **James 1:21**: *“Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness in humility received the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.”* That means being open to what it says to us and having a willingness to respond in obedience.

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The Word does not consist of shades of gray. There is some things that are not universally applicable in the Scriptures, however when something is in the Old and New Testaments and affirmed by the Lord Himself, Jesus, it is universally applicable. Jesus said whoever hears my words and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the sand.

James goes on to say in **1:22** *“but prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”*

This leads us to the second way we are filled with the Holy Spirit – we have to follow what we learn. We have to put them into practice. We are to flesh out what is in our heart with deeds, with good works so that people can see the difference.

And number three we need to daily confess our sins when we have done wrong. **1 Jn. 1:8:** *“If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

THE KINGDOM WILL GROW

But there is something else that is necessary for attaining a Christian worldview. We need to be in active relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Our job is to build the Kingdom of God on earth. Will we be successful? Only together. We may not win the world, but we will win those whom God has appointed. And that my friends is all that matters and is why we need to be part of “organized religion.” It’s called the body of Christ – many members – with many different gifts and functions. Jesus said the kingdom would grow and it has with now over 2 Billion professing the name of Christ.

Jesus’ words remind me of the growth of the internet. The internet began in 1962 when Paul Baran and engineer at the Ran Corporation think tank, found a way to move messages through a network of Defense Department computers. In 1968, the Department of Defense commissioned the Advance Research project Agency to build the ARPAnet. In 1971, only 23 computers were on the ARPAnet. In 1981, IBM introduced the personal computer, bringing the computer to the home. By 1984, more than 1000 computers were on the net. By 1989, the number had risen to more than 100,000. In 1992, more than one million computers were on the internet. Just two years later, in 1994, local internet access providers and on-line services greatly expanded their Internet services. In 1995, 30 million computers were on the internet and now today that figure is over a billion! Likewise, the Kingdom of God began small with a few hundred disciples and has spread during the last 2000 years from person to person and culture to culture, country to country with more and more getting online with the Lord Jesus Christ. That my friends is what we are a part of.

THE KINGDOM WILL RETURN

Finally, the Kingdom of God is something we are to look forward to. Our worldview most have the future return of Christ in mind. The truth is this planet we call earth is not our home. We pray “Thy Kingdom Come!” Jesus said He is coming back. He is coming back to set the record straight, to judge apostasy and disobedience, rebellion and sin, and He is coming back to establish His Kingdom forever.

And the way we get through the tough times is to remember the sure and certain hope of Christ’s return, but not just His return but the resurrection of our bodies. When we die I believe our

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soul or spirit goes to be with the Lord. But there is coming a day when these mortal bodies of ours will be transformed and we will be given immortal ones.

I don't understand all the hows and whys, life itself is an amazing mystery, but I do know that life is real, and that God is real and that His Word is trustworthy and true. So when God teaches us that "*we are walk by faith not by sight,*", we need to remember to trust in God's Word and not in our own feelings and know how. As Bible tells us in **1 Thess. 5:24**, "*God is faithful, He will bring it to pass.*"

My friends, this should be our world view. A worldview wrapped up in the coming of God's Kingdom, the building of His Kingdom and the return of His Kingdom. It is the only hope for a sick and dying world, and it is the only worldview that prepares us for eternal life. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!