

*God has transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,
in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

One month from today is Christmas Eve,
the celebration of the incarnation of Christ Jesus born in humble human flesh.
But before we get there are the four weeks of Advent,
beginning next week.
And before we get there is Thanksgiving, and before that -- today,
the last Sunday of the church year,
the culmination of our journey with Jesus,
observed as the Feast of Christ the King.

We celebrate (in the words of today's Collect) the King of kings and Lord of lords
who brings all the peoples of the earth together under his most gracious rule.
And to see what that's like, look no further than today's gospel.

You'd think we'd be more likely to hear this passage about Jesus hanging on a cross
between two criminals on, say, Good Friday, wouldn't you?
Yet here it is on this day of Christ the King,
with soldiers only mockingly calling him a king.
The irony is that they were right
without knowing it.

For Christ Jesus is a king unlike any this world has ever known.
Not enthroned in riches and splendor,
but poured out for others in radical love and radical service.
A crown not of jewels, but thorns.
Hands not extended to kiss his ring,
but stretched out, wounded, on the hard wood of the cross
to draw all creation to himself.

That's the kingship we celebrate today.
That's the kingdom where we are citizens, even now.

Christ the King is fairly recent, as far as feast days go.

It was initiated in 1925 by the Pope as a direct antidote to the rise of nationalism and fascism.

In the Italian context that would of course be Mussolini (and, not too long after, Hitler in Germany).

To proclaim Christ as King, is to say that Christ is supreme above all powers and principalities, practices and prejudices, of this world. To say that Christ is supreme above all, has real-world consequences here and now.

I've been thinking about the message of Christ the King for our time. I believe that dismantling white supremacy is one of the most urgent callings of our time. For if I profess that Christ is king, that Christ is supreme above all, then nothing else can be.

Now I bet that when you think white supremacy, I'm not the first person who comes to mind. But I'm trying to come to terms with the bracing fact that I, and frankly most of us, have benefitted from white supremacy, if only unwittingly.

It's about time I got my wits about me, and became more aware of just how many advantages I've had in life because I'm white.

I can rationalize that I'm just a girl from a little town in WV, I'm in the first generation of my family to finish college, and I've worked hard (darn it!) for everything I've managed to scrape together. That's all true.

But it's also true that being white has propelled me along the way. I didn't have to look around a sea of pale faces the first day of high school, as one of my classmates did, and say warily, "I'm the only one who looks like me. Again."

I've never had to give my son "the talk" about safety that African American families must have.

The only time my son has ever had a run-in with the police was when he was walking down the street at night with his friend Joe -- and even as a middle schooler he knew why they were singled out. You guessed it, Joe is black.

I've never had an experience like I witnessed last week during the pilgrimage to the Museum of African American History and Culture. I was standing at an exhibit about the underground railroad with a mother and her very young daughter, looking at a scene of runaway enslaved people who looked more like them than me, as I heard the mother stammer and struggle to answer the question, "But Mommy, what were they running away from?"

And God only knows how many times a door has swung open for me, the benefit of doubt given, a preference enjoyed – not always overtly, but subtly – because I happen to be white.

But God does know all that and more. And I'm praying that my eyes and my heart will be opened to learn.

It's the least I can do if I dare profess Christ as King with any credibility. What am I here for if not to do that? What are we as Christians here for but to profess by word and deed that Christ alone is supreme?

Oh, to be healed – *freed* – to live and work even now as citizens of that kingdom described in our second lesson from Colossians. To live and work in that kingdom where Christ reigns supreme as the firstborn of all creation, holding all things together; where the fullness of God is pleased to dwell and through whom God is pleased to reconcile all things, making peace through the blood of his cross.

Dear companions in Christ, fellow citizens even now of that kingdom,

let us uphold and challenge one another in this godly work of being healed --
being *freed* – from the sin of white supremacy and
all that keeps us from serving Christ alone as supreme.

Let us pray again the Collect of this day of Christ the King;
please join me:

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

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.**

