

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 2019

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"He's Still the King of Kings!"

Based on Revelation 1:4-8

After spending the Passover Festival in the big city of Jerusalem, families began to trickle home to their quiet villages in the hills. They carried with them, supplies from big box stores (think Costco or Walmart), gifts and trinkets, tummies full of favourite family recipes, and stories of all the comings and goings in the city: who was engaged to be married, who had died, who was sick, and who was causing scandal.

But there was another story the returning families were most eager to share as those at home gathered to hear the news. It was a most sensational story, either from its horror, or its unbelievable outcome. It was a story about the peasant preacher whose name was known to everyone: Jesus.

It had started a week before the Festival, with palm branches and shouts like we just finished singing from the Gaither hymn:

"Hosanna! The whole world is singing!"

*The hope of all ages is come.
Sing His praise, sing His
greatness, Let everyone know
He is the King of kings and
Lord of lords!"*

~from He's Still the Kings of Kings

Word spread like wildfire through the streets of Jerusalem. Jesus was coming to town! He was going to save them all! He was going to overthrow Pilate, sit on the throne and rule with 'peace and justice for all!'

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

~Revelations 1:4,5

- Oppression from the Romans was over!
- Overindulgence in the Temple was finished
- A cout-de-tat? A rebellion?
- No one seemed to know just how this

was all going to happen but in the frenzy of the moment, the 'how' seemed not to matter. Jesus was to be their king! Hallelujah!

The hours passed. The children grew restless. The meals were finished. And a disturbing hush settled over the city as the Passover festivities began to gear up.

There were whispers of arrest, collusion, and conspiracy in the dark hours of the night. It would seem that that very words the crowds had chanted just days before, "Jesus, the king of kings," would be the one piece of ammunition that could be twisted to justify his death. And the Romans did love to display death at its most horrific, most fear inspiring, and most torturous manner.

There was no mercy from Pilate.

"Here is your king," [he] said. (John 19:14)

To mock and shame?
Or to quietly express the truth he saw, but felt unable to act upon?

There was grace, but it came from Christ himself to the thief dying beside him.

"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43)

There was only death. But then there was life.

Jesus came and stood among them and said,

"Peace be with you!"
(John 20:19).

A generation later, the writer of Revelations, age dimming his vision, but not his recollection of the events that Holy Week, reminded the fledgling churches of his day (seven churches...roughly the same size as the Presbytery of Kamloops) that the memories of those events were not just fanciful dreams of a good man, but that Jesus was

"The faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth." (v5)

As these early believers struggled to make their place in the great tapestry of society and culture and religion of their day, as they made those difficult transitions from Jewish heritage to Christian discipleship, as they came to terms with the sacrifices, temptations, and successes of their inner witness to a living Saviour, they were reminded that they served a God

"Who is, and who was, and who is to come." (v1)

- That the church they were creating would look very different than the temple they had grown up in;

- That the world they lived in might be indifferent or ambivalent to the passion and dedication with which they served;

- That the relationships around them would be reshaped, let go, or lifted up; there would be losses and there would be gains;

- That through it all, they served a King, who was master over all earthly kings, powerful people, impossible situations, or bureaucratic nightmares

Today our church finds itself, once again, struggling to make our place in the great tapestry of society and cultures and religions of our day.

- We like our brothers and sisters before us, live in a world that is increasing ambivalent or indifferent to our beliefs, our place in communities, and our passion for people.

- We, too, must transition from 'what was' to 'what is' if we are to survive as institutional churches and adjust to the economical realities of today.

- We will gain some things along the way: some new hymns, appreciation for different styles of worship, see new opportunities to serve our communities.

- We will lose some things as well. Some ways that church worked in the past, will not work anymore. I don't know all the reasons why they don't work, only that they don't.

And if we keep kicking the same old can over and over, and refuse to adjust, we will have no church one day, only a very dented can.

I know that we are afraid that we will lose what is the essence of our Christian faith if we change.

I know that we are afraid we might lose what was good and holy and upright from the years past.

But these fears are no different than the fears of the good folk of those seven churches in Asia.

And look! We're still here. And we still worship and serve.

Christ is still our king and lord.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." (v8)

How can we go wrong as long as we believe in a God like that?

In the end, I'd rather have Christ as my King than a dented can.

How about you?

Amen.

