

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

**November 24, 2024**



## KINGS

*a perpetual disappointment*

by Drew Downs

This week we get the annual reminder that kings are always a disappointment. They are human, after all. But more than that, they, above all others, are not allowed to be. They are supposed to be better than the rest, and then, when they are not, we act surprised, confused and bewildered, like some sort of deal has been undermined, as if we have been cheated out of promised riches or, more likely, safety and security. It's what we bartered away freedom for, after all.

God warned his people thousands of years ago that kings aren't worth it. But people keep insisting, throughout history, that one person must come, save us, rule us, make the hard decisions none of us is willing to make, get their hands dirty, destroy our enemies, punish the traitors, reject the outsiders...a whole host of things so unChristlike. Because we're afraid of what it means to simply trust in our neighbors as Jesus, in faith, in love, in service to the whole community.

# ORDINARY TIME

2024

## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

### **A Reminder**

This week I had the unwelcome reminder that COVID-19 is still around and kicking. I may have picked it up at Convention or Starbucks, but nonetheless, I had it and it laid me out for a day and made my nose drip for three and even now that I can go out, I'll mask up for several more days.

This past week, as we planned for Sunday, I was reminded of the questions we had during the early days of the pandemic, our resolve to keep each other safe, the frustration of disruption, and our trying to figure out how to do things.

And as much as "normal" seems normal, what happens when one little aspect changes? Like when the priest is sick. And it is weird to feel well enough to be with the community, but not yet be in the clear enough to breathe over the food we are to share!

I am grateful that my Dad was in town anyway and could supply. I hope his presence this week was supportive to you! I also hope that these things we have learned about ourselves, our gatherings over the last few years are similarly measured with grace and gratitude. That normal is, in fact, delicate. It can be disrupted and changed; it can evolve and become something new, too.

Perhaps most of all, knowing that our gatherings are, themselves, fleeting. Bits of moments, friendships, connections, experiences shared and then we trust that we can return for another, next time. Each one is special, though, an opportunity, that, with new gratitude, we might offer our thanks.

With love,  
Drew

# ORDINARY TIME

2024

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## FOR SUNDAY

*Proper Last B*

November 24, 2024

### **Collect**

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 for ever.

**Amen.**

### **Reading**

John 18:33-37

Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

# ORDINARY TIME

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## Reflection

Jesus's critics have started looking for ways to kill him ten chapters ago. And now, here he is. They paid off an inside man to deliver Jesus in the Garden where he was arrested, bound, and sent off to the chief priest, then Pilate, Rome's representative, the one man who can take care of him.

Jesus's exchange with Pilate is famously about authority and power. It is written to make Pilate seem curious about the ways of the Jewish people; it seems odd that they would arrest their king and send him off for execution. In his experience, king's demand the execution, not receive it.

His lack of familiarity with the role Jesus embodies is not simply the problem of a mistranslation of a foreign people, but with the very notion of what it means to have power and authority. Or as we might put it today, what it means to lead.

This exchange must also give us pause, too. With how we seek to see Jesus as king ourselves. Not just because this new church holiday of Christ the King is centered on Jesus's spiritual kingship, but in word and deed, as well.

The terms Jesus seems far more comfortable with are *Messiah* and *Liberator*. His commitment to being a king is less than zero. Pilate has no hope of understanding this any more than a person raised on the American Dream could imagine choosing *not* to get ahead. This is our challenge, too. In seeing Pilate's confusion as not all that different from our own. And that our attempts to comprehend Jesus's authority *without* the power to control and destroy, to kill, to choose the very living of every person under his control but to, instead, suffer crucifixion, die, and trust in God's intention to raise him on the third day. That we are to trust in the one who trusts, love the one who loves, and share with others what was shared with us. A life of service and grace.

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