

## **Sermon Sunday May 12 2024 Easter VII**

**This Sunday is the odd juxtaposition of the story of Jesus as Christ the King, and our secular holiday, Mother's Day.**

**Let me start out by saying that many of us are delighted to celebrate our mothers, but for some of us, our relationship with the woman who gave birth to us is complicated. I understand this – I was adopted at the age of four months, and it took me a long time to have peace with the idea that I was given up, as I began to frame that act as “given to” someone who desperately wanted to be a mother and who, in all ways except biological, was my mother. I honor us all – those whose mothers were gems, those whose mothers were not, those who never knew our mothers – and I honor, too, those for whom motherhood was not possible or desirable, or who have lost children. My hope is that I do not cause any pain in the words that I say for those who see this as a hard day.**

**Because I think as we ponder the notion of this great King, Jesus Christ, who is giving his final goodbye to his disciples in the Gospel today. Much of this reading is a prayer to his Heavenly Father to protect those who were entrusted to him:**

***“And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not***

*belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one."*

**Forgive me for taking this sublime prayer and making it more mundane, but as I re-read it this week, I found myself thinking about when our eldest son got his drivers' license and was driving on his own the first time. I inwardly prayed "God, I ask you for protection for him."**

**That's what mothers do, isn't it? We pray to protect those whom we love.**

**I said the same prayer over and over when each of them learned to drive, when each of them went away to college, when each of them did something that put them at risk.**

**Because that's what mothers do.**

**And that's the thing that strikes me so much about entitling this Sunday the celebration of Christ the King, because he is such a different king. Yes, he has suffered mightily for our sake. Yes, he has died but has conquered death, rising from the tomb.**

**But there are certain things that suggest that instead of a warrior king, he is one who cares deeply about those entrusted to him, as a mother does, and is willing to do just about anything to save them, including that death.**

**Earlier in John's Gospel, Jesus tells them that he is going to his Father's house, where he will prepare a place for them. And I think of my mother-in-law, still offering rooms in her home as a temporary place for friends and relations to stay when passing through, still preparing a place for them before they arrive, despite her advanced age and near-blindness. She has always been**

one to offer hospitality, and it feels rather like Jesus going to prepare a place for his disciples.

Jesus has prepared his disciples, teaching them what they need to know. And I think of my mother telling me how to deal with difficult people, because she knew I had a habit of saying the one thing that would set a difficult person off.

I think of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, mourning what would happen to him in Jerusalem: *“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.”*

That female, maternal imagery points me toward someone whose Kingship is not warrior kingship, the way kings of the secular world style themselves.

No, it is the kingship that is based in kinship, in deep and lasting relationships.

Rather like the relationship that our mothers taught us, complex but loving.

And so on this day we celebrate a different sort of King, the Christ who leads with love, and perhaps that is something he learned how to show from his own mother, who understood the complexity of human relationships better than most.

All glory on this day to the King of Love, who has done all for us. May we follow his example of love rather than of battle, of care rather than of power. May our kinship of love outshine the kingships of the world, and may the world be better for it.

Amen.