

Christ the King

Psalm 105:1-7
John 18:33-37

November 26, 2017
Faith Community

What do you do in a crowded elevator? Stare at your feet? Watch the floor indicator do its thing? You probably don't talk, unless, of course, you are an extrovert extraordinaire.

Evangelical wild man Tony Campolo was the last one to get on a crowded express elevator one day. With a captive audience behind him, he turned and faced the whole bunch and led them in a rendition of "You Are My Sunshine," for all forty-eight floors.

Someone asked a bunch of men one day to use their imagination. Instead of, "What would Jesus do?" he asked, "What would Jesus say in a crowded elevator?"

"There was an immediate response from a man in the back. He said Jesus might say, 'Going up?'"¹

Going up is a big deal these days, which is another way of saying we're all about looking ahead. We study trends, forecasts and prognostications, and even pay big bucks to those who have a good track record in this sort of thing. There can be a price, however, when things don't go the way we think they should.

"In the fall of 2001 Intel announced a 19% profit. Not too shabby, we'd like to think. Immediately, however, its value tanked twenty percent and it lost 80 billion dollars in one hour. That was because, in spite of such a dramatic profit the company did not meet Wall Street expectations."²

So, with an eye on looking ahead, what will you be doing New Year's Eve? Before you think you've got five weeks to plan something, it's really sooner than you think. New Year's Eve is this coming Saturday.

While the calendar year begins on January 1, the academic year in the fall, the fiscal year July first or maybe October first, the church year gets off the ground on the first day of Advent. It's always a Sunday, and this year it's one week from today. We begin Advent here with our annual

¹ The Joyful Noiseletter, January, 2001, p.2, as cited in Dynamic Preaching, Vol. XVIII, No. 4, Oct./Nov./Dec. 2003, p. 51.

² Leonard Sweet, Carpe Manana (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2001, 15-16.

cantata, this year entitled, “The Heart of God.” Get here early for good seats.

Advent is all about expectation, as the world relives the coming of its Savior. Since today is the last Sunday of the church year, this is called Christ the King Sunday.

Do you see how it works? The year begins with the longing for Jesus, and the year ends with Jesus on the throne. When it comes to looking in any direction, even in how we mark time, you can’t beat Jesus. Friends, it always comes back to God.

“A wonderfully strange legend circulated in the early church....It added a layer of fantasy to the biblical accounts of God’s creating the heavens and the earth through the use of words. ‘Let there be light,’ God said, and there was light. All he had to do was say it.

“‘Let there be water. Let there be vegetation. Let there be animals. Let there be people.’ And it was always done, because God’s words have power.

“It so happened, however, that the devil was jealous and angry about what God had done, especially making those human creatures. So, as this legend goes, he tricked God into a confrontation. The devil asked him what was so special about those creatures that we call Adam and Eve. When God opened his mouth to speak, the devil bound his tongue so he couldn’t talk. And since God’s creative power was in his words, the devil pretty much had his way with people.

“Countless years went by, but the devil couldn’t resist coming back to mock God and gloat over his triumph. One day he was taunting the silent deity, and God responded by holding up one finger. ‘One?’ the devil asked. ‘Are you trying to tell me you want to say just *one* word?’

“God nodded in the affirmative, and the devil thought to himself, ‘I don’t suppose even God can do much harm to me with just one word.’ So he unbound God’s tongue, and God spoke his one word in a quiet whisper. It was a word that would resound forever in every corner of the universe. It was a word that spoke of total access to the kingdom of heaven for all God’s children.

“And the word God spoke was *Jesus!*”³

And in the strangest kingship the world would ever experience, King Jesus became known more for what he gave up than for what he accumulated.

He gave up his position.

He gave up his career.

He surrendered his reputation.

He lost his family.

He gave up his life and paved the way to new life for all who receive him.

How do you respond to all that? What do you say? What do you do?

Psalm 105 is filled with action words, especially the first few verses. Read it yourself sometime, I dare you, especially during this Christ the King and Thanksgiving Season and make your own list. Here’s some of what you’ll find:

Give thanks.

Call on God’s name.

Make known what God has done.

Sing.

Sing praise.

Tell God’s wonderful acts.

Glory in God’s holy name.

Rejoice.

Look to the Lord.

Seek God’s face.

Remember the wonders God has done. (vv.1-7)

When you’re this focused, this centered, this passionate, you’ll see that indeed it always comes back to God, and that’s because of Jesus.

“I am a king,” Jesus said to his interrogator. “In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world.” (John 18:37)

We’re on the verge of a new year, friends. Start it with Jesus, the king who gave it all away because he loves you. Don’t you love him? Do you understand what’s been done on your behalf? Do you count him your highest praise?

³ Leonard Sweet, Postmodern Pilgrims: First Century Passion For the 21st Century Church (Nashville, Broadman and Holdman Publishers, 2000) 88-89.

Listen to how the apostle Paul put it. He wants you to be able to take in,

...the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its lengths! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God. (Eph 3:18-19, TMSG)

Let Christ become king of your life. You'll wonder how you ever got along without him.