

Christ the King

York Chapel
Duke Divinity School
November 25, 1997

Greeting

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

Blessing and honor and glory and might be unto the Lamb!

Worthy is Christ who has ransomed us by his blood
from every tribe and tongue and nation,
and made his people a kingdom, and priests to our God.

**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come! Amen.**

* Soon and Very Soon #706

* Te Deum Laudamus (see back of bulletin)

Prayer

Almighty God, who gave your Son Jesus Christ a realm
where all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him;
make us loyal followers of our living Lord,
that we may always hear his word,
follow his teachings, and live in his Spirit;
and hasten the day when every knee shall bow
and every tongue confess that he is Lord;
to your eternal glory **Amen.**

John 18:33-38

Sermon

As It Was in the Beginning Is Now and Ever Shall Be

* Hallelujah Chorus

Preacher: Sarah Mount

Liturgist: Stacy Myers

* Those who are able please stand

Te Deum Laudamus

You are God: we praise you;

You are the Lord: we acclaim you;

You are the eternal Father

All creation worships you.

To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,

Cherubim and Seraphim, sing in endless praise:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

The glorious company of apostles praise you.

The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.

The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.

Throughout the world the holy Church acclaims you;

**Father, of majesty unbounded
your true and only Son, worthy of all worship,
and the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide.**

You, Christ, are the king of glory,

the eternal Son of the Father.

When you became human to set us free

you did not shun the Virgin's womb.

You overcame the sting of death

and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

You are seated at God's right hand in glory

We believe that you will come and be our judge.

Come then, Lord, and help your people,
bought with the price of your own blood,
**and bring us with your saints
to glory everlasting.**

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be
John 18:33-38

York Chapel, Duke Divinity School

November 26, 1997

By Sarah Mount

Pilate then went back into his headquarters and summoned Jesus. "So you are the king of the Jews?" he said. Jesus replied, "Is that your own question, or have others suggested it to you?" "Am I a Jew?" said Pilate, "Your own nation and their chief priests have brought you before me. What have you done?" Jesus replied, "My kingdom does not belong to this world. If it did, my followers would be fighting to save me from the clutches of the Jews. My kingdom belongs elsewhere." "You are a king, then?" said Pilate. Jesus answered, " 'King' is your word. My task is to bear witness to the truth. For this I was born; for this I came into the world and all who are not deaf to truth listen to my voice." Pilate said, "What is truth?"

Let me tell you a story, a grand and glorious story, a true story which gives us strength and courage and reason to hope. This is a story which we have heard many times, ever since our baptisms, yet it always bears to be re-told. It is good for us to hear it over and over again. It is a story as old as creation, yet we who are living these days, studying and working in this place are included as part of it.

Once upon a time, in the beginning, the Master of the Universe *was*. This being was one, and yet was three and the three danced and played together and called each other names - Spirit, King, Shepherd, Word, Father, Adoni, Christ, Vine, Wisdom, God. And they said to each other let us manifest our joy and fill our Universe with good things. And at a word they created darkness and light, sea and land, heaven and earth. The Word kept speaking, "Mountain, giraffe, student, lime green, baby, sea horse, potato, - each creature in its turn took form - chocolate, mother, desert, cherubim, professor, snow flake - each creature was pronounced good - goose, thunderbolt, chromosome, prophet, galaxy, platypus. Because God was the creator, God took dominion over all of creation. And so from the very beginning the whole universe was like a kingdom, and the Word who created them was like a king. The creatures praised the Lord,

singing together in harmony Hallelujah!

But the creatures with - - more intelligence, the ones called human - - they didn't always perceive their creator. They didn't always notice the touch of the hand which woke them in the mornings, or smell the sweet breath which, blown into them, made them come alive. They no longer joined with the rest of creation singing praises to God. Instead the humans went about making their own small kingdoms where they soon forgot the truth of their creator and turned their attention to other matters. Humans began to fear creatures which were more powerful than they, and instead of using their intellect to find ways to live with the lions and elephants humans went about exterminating them. The humans built walls for protection and put locks on their doors to keep unwanted creatures, including other humans, locked out. They set up various power systems, lords and serfs, masters and slaves, bosses and workers, governors like Pontius Pilate and provinces like Judea, so that some did all the hard work and others lived in luxury. Then individuals fought each other to take more of the power for themselves, doing anything to become king or CEO, anything to get more money, more recognition or better grades. Some people even desired to kill others and wars broke out with followers of one faction fighting to save their leaders from the clutches of the other faction. They never spoke of creation, but called where they lived the world and they told each other, "You've got to look out for yourself if you want to make it in this world." By this time the peoples were in such darkness that they couldn't see the Master of the Universe, they didn't know the truth. Some people wanted somebody to come to save them, but they always looked to other humans. Under human rule the world became a place of sin and death and we were torn apart by the wounds of sin.

So the Lord of all creation decided to become more easily apparent. "I'll have to let them

see me," God said, "I will put on flesh, call to them through a human voice, touch them with human hands. Then they will see the truth that I am the creator and they are the subjects of my dominion." So the Word gracefully became flesh, uniting with the world to be a kind of human exegesis. Christ Jesus was born and bore witness to the true reign of God as he healed the sick, taught, and fed the multitudes. Though he was master he served his subjects, though he had true authority he washed their feet. Those who were not deaf to the truth listened to Jesus' voice, as the sheep listen to their shepherd. They came to know Christ as the only true king, one with the creator and Lord of their lives.

Still, not everyone recognized Christ as the Ruler of the Universe. Those who had Jesus arrested, and Pilate, were still thinking in earthly terms and didn't want this man Jesus to challenge their positions of power. So they put Christ to death on a cross, for a dead man, they reasoned, is no longer a threat.

But the truth is that Christ remained God even in death. For while worldly kingdoms are all doomed to death, and no human can rule forever, Christ is not confined to this world. As Jesus told Pilate, "My kingdom does not belong to this world." The Word is bigger than life and death, when Christ died he crashed the gates of death, and took the sons of Adam and daughters of Eve, the prophets and kings and even death itself by the hand and lifted us. In this way Christ the King became also our Savior and redeemed us, pulling us up with him as he rose. Christ has set us free.

Oh ye who sit here today, ye who have been baptized, ye who mourn, and worry and fear. All ye who struggle to gain authority and power take heed. Christ *is* the king, everlasting and eternal! We are heirs to God's order, God's harmony, and God's grace. Christ has made known

to us that he is the way and the truth and the life. Through our baptisms we have pledged ourselves to this king, pledged to stop trying to rule our world by ourselves. Christ is not just the Lord of the minds, hearts and wills of the baptized but is Lord of the whole world. When we proclaim that Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords we say that Christ is the Monarch, the only ruler over all the kings, and queens, nation states and multinational corporations, deans and professors, bishops and conventions, presidents and Army Commanders. Christ has dominion over all people, dominion over our fears, dominion over our deaths. Christ has, is and will bring peace among all the nations. In this sense Christendom is not over, for Christ has made the world his domain, and has dominion over all of creation.

This story has no end for Christ's majesty is infinite. Angels and Archangels, serenade with uninterrupted exaltations. Thrones and Dominations pay tribute with ceaseless applause. Amoebas and stars, chant to the Lord in everlasting celebration. The trees of the field clap their hands and the whales of the sea croon in continual worship. All the host of heaven sings in unending praise of Christ's glory. Come, let us join the chorus! Hallelujah!