

Sermon: Christ the King

The Rev. Mike Wernick

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Year C

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

Psalm 93

Revelation 1:4b-8

John 18:33-37

I've been watching some shows recently on the Science Channel... about how the universe works... about its origins and its end... *its Alpha and its Omega*... about the Big Bang... how *not a single thing came into Being without the Word*... and about the formation of the planets... our solar system... stars and galaxies... how *all things came into being through Him*...

The show also explores the mystery of dark energy and dark matter... it turns out that about 68% of the universe is dark energy... and about 27% is dark matter... the rest... everything on Earth... everything ever observed with optical telescopes and all other instruments... all normal matter... adds up to less than 5% of the universe...

Dark energy and dark matter have not been detected directly... their existence and properties are inferred from the gravitational effects they have on visible matter... on radiation... and on the large-scale structure of the universe...

And the visible matter... what we can see... includes star factories... vast lanes of dust and gas... hundreds of thousands of light years long... and when enough of the dust and gas is drawn together by gravity... when the concentration in a particular area becomes dense enough... high enough... when it begins to interact together in a particular way... there is a tipping point... complex chemical and subatomic reactions occur... fusion begins... and stars are formed...

And millions of years later... one of those stars can explode... become a supernova... and can release so much energy that it could crush three of our suns down to a point...

and create a black hole... while at the same time... blowing off enough material to create 25 solar systems like ours... incomprehensibly powerful...

So far at least... there's no agreement about whether the universe will keep expanding forever... whether it will reverse direction and contract back in on itself into a Big Crunch... or even whether our Big Crunch might be someone else's Big Bang... there is Mystery beyond comprehension... there is creation and dissolution around us all the time...

And all of these things are determined by principles we only dimly understand... laws which govern the sub-atomic quantum level... and the cosmic level... a transcendent... dynamic Truth... along a continuum which is inherently consistent... even when our limited vision makes it seem inconsistent...

And this is where we live our lives... at the margins of the holy... and we are reminded to be in the world but not of it... and in the struggle to move away from conflict and make peace with one other... there is much that we see... but like dark energy and matter... much more that we don't see... the ongoing tribalism in the world has a myopic vision... it believes that it's right and everyone else is wrong... too many of its leaders lord their power over others... too many others... tend to take what's normal for them and make it *normative* for everyone else... and too often we see past the log in our own eye and focus on the speck in our neighbor's... sometimes it seems that all I have to get rid of my own log... all I have at my disposal... is extra-fine sandpaper... so it's going to take a while...

But the fear we feel at this conflict is real... it should not be invalidated... or minimized... or shamed... and the evil we face must not be passively accepted... like the forces and matter which come together in the birth of a star... the forces which come together to destroy can not be fully understood... and [I don't know about you... but] I struggle with the idea of meeting violence with violence... either in capital punishment or in

terrorism... but I appreciate how Pastor Chris Glaser put it... he wrote: *I oppose executions partly because they make us all killers... but I am not a pacifist either... ISIS and terrorism of any kind must be confronted... if only because it's usually the most vulnerable who suffer from their actions... confrontation may have non-violent forms... like diplomacy... which would be preferred... but I believe this will require more... though we should never equate the "more" with the will of God...*

Are you the King of the Jews... My kingdom is not from this world... but I came into the world... to testify to the Truth... and everyone who belongs to the Truth listens to my voice...

What we have here... are two people talking past each other... on two different pages... it's apples and oranges... Pilate's question is rooted in the practices of coercion... practices at which the Roman Empire excelled... Jesus' response is rooted in the practice of devotion... his sheep know and follow his voice... Pilate's question is rooted in short-sightedness and the fear of losing power... Jesus' response is rooted in being all-seeing and all-powerful...

Jesus might as well have said to Pilate... You have no point of reference that could possibly help you understand that which I rule... you see only the visible matter... only a tiny fraction of what exists... I not only know its totality... I not only wrote the blueprint for all of creation... but it all came into being because of me...

This gentle Truth is here with us now... it is active but cannot easily be detected... it is transcendent and too few people are listening for its voice... but its presence is inferred by its effect on other truths... like how there is a connection between limited vision and fear and coercion... and a connection between God's vision and love and devotion... and we can infer other truths by asking ourselves questions like: *Who am I in the midst of evil...* and: *Do I put myself first as king... or do I put Christ first as King...*

We may not see all that is around us... it is possible to lose sight of it... it may seem to not be true... but *the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it*... so perhaps we need a new vision... or a new perspective to see by this new light... but I believe we are moving into a better place... a more gracious place... a more honest and inclusive Way... but it takes time... far more time than I'd like... and maybe too many in the world are also using extra-fine sandpaper... but we continue our sanding... and we continue our Advent waiting...

Waiting not for the Pilates... or petty kings... or political wannabes of this world... but waiting for the King of Love to come through all of us... waiting for all of the variables to be drawn together by humility... for the concentration of vulnerability to become dense enough... for it to begin to interact together in selflessness... waiting for it to all come together into a singular tipping point... so that coercion turns into devotion... and so that the energy and light that is hidden... becomes measured and visible...

The author of Ephesians wrote: *Glory to God whose power working in us... can do infinitely more than we can ask... or imagine*... let's not stop asking... and let's not stop imagining... Holy God... make it so...

Mike+