**Ephesians 3:14-21**

14For this reason I bow my knees before the Lord, 15from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. 16I pray that, according to the riches of God’s glory, God may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, 17and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. 18I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20Now to God who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, 21to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

**John 6:1-21**

6After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. 2A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. 3Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. 4Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. 5When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” 6He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. 7Philip answered him, “Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.” 8One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, 9“There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?” 10Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. 11Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. 12When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.” 13So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. 14When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

15When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. 16When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. 19When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. 20But he said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.” 21Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

“Pray . . . That He May Be King”

The Rev. Lisa J. Durkee

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Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer.

What a beautiful prayer that Paul sends up and out for the people of Ephesus! “the Father[--our Parent], 15from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name” Every family in heaven and on earth comes from God, our Parent, the Creator Almighty. That’s pretty reassuring, isn’t it, when you consider what some of our lesser genes pass along? We are part of the family of God, and don’t let anyone ever make you feel as if you are descended from a line that is lesser than theirs. We are part of the Family of God.

I pray that, **“**God may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through God’s Spirit.” That’s language that we use pretty frequently, but have you stopped to think about what a powerful strength it is that we are talking about, here? God can grant us strength in the inside of us, through God’s Spirit. The Holy Spirit *is* here with us, and I pray that we may all be strengthened to know that presence with us in the face of every adversity!

Some of you will remember the BG’s song from the 70s, “How Deep is Your Love.” Don’t worry, I’m not going to sing that one, but Paul might have if he had known it, don’t you think? He prays that the Church might **“**have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” So that we might be filled with the fullness of God . . . Wow! If we are so filled, how might we feel emptied by anything that *this* life might throw at us? How might we grow disillusioned by our failings and our frustrations with the failings of others? May we have the power to know the love of Christ so that we may be filled with the fullness of God!

And let’s not, please forget how Paul closes his prayer at this point. To *God* be the glory. **What does giving God glory look like? *Leave room for an answer here.* What might it *not* look like, in human actions? *Leave room for an answer here.*** Maybe giving God glory is easier to do when we feel like we are living into the abundance that Paul promises within his prayer. Maybe you aren’t feeling particularly blessed by abundance just now. So, pray. Wouldn’t you have loved to be in the crowd when Jesus performed the miracle of sharing the loaves and fishes? Would you have been one of the ones wanting to take him to make him king? **What does that mean, anyway?** ***Leave room for an answer here.***

I know that I have shared with some of you, maybe even with a lot of you my occasional frustration with our hymnal, *The New Century Hymnal*. It may not be for the same reasons some of you also express from time to time. For me, while I very much applaud the decision to make some of the language less gender based in referring to God, I am personally less concerned with our language around Jesus’ identity as Lord and King. In my UCC polity class nearly 20 years ago, from a church historian, a professor who also was part of the team that edited old and new hymns for their inclusion in the hymnal, I learned that there was initially an attempt to remove the word Lord entirely. Instead, there are just 17 mentions of the term Lord to describe Jesus. This had to do with our human memory of the time of Lords and Serfs in a system that held one *human* as less than another, and one *human* as inherently more valuable than others. These were human rulers that led by force in a system in which they *demanded* service and praise from their subjects. *Our Lord*, whom we have named our Christ, does not demand, but invites us to honor him. The question, then remains why it is that I, that we might be perfectly comfortable honoring Jesus as Lord and calling him my only king. What does Jesus ask of us? What does God ask of us? We know the one law in which Jesus summarizes all the laws of the Hebrew Bible: “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself.” The prophet Micah made clear what God’s leadership asks of us: “God has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” So, if we have human leaders striving for anything that does not look like justice for all God’s children—by which I mean all humanity—or does not look like kindness or humility, then we ought to question whether *our King* requires this of us.

I have been struck by what might be necessary to make Jesus King here, and it weighs on me a bit heavily, particularly in a time when we hear of human desires for dictatorship and a push to control other’s human freedoms. Who is telling others that each person is valuable just as they are, and that God wants us to love one another? Quite frequently, I wonder where people are hearing the truth about what Jesus teaches us about abundant living—abundance that God provides and that we are asked to share. We are not asked to hoard what we have in the face of others who do not have enough. What do we take for granted about the presence of Jesus and of God in our lives—our greater lives? How do we know these things? Who will teach our grandchildren the Truth about God’s love and about living in the world in a way that honors it?

Jesus still says to us, “It is I, do not be afraid.” What other King says this with such assurance, with the truth of everlasting love and everlasting life behind it? Thanks be to God.