Courage is fear that has said its prayers.

Today we celebrate the Reign of Christ, the King. And we read, "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth" (Revelation 1: 5)

Ruler of the kings of the earth, and we image every picture we have ever seen of Jesus on a throne, looking kingly, mighty and majestic. Walking through history, we could do a slide show of Jesus dressed up in Empire. Jesus in on a Byzantium throne. Jesus in the robes of human rulers, Jesus in gold, Jesus is dominating and controlling human affairs. We see Jesus as a king.

But careful now. Careful now. "Watch out that no one deceives you" (Mark 13:5)

Because the next step might be to guess that kings and rulers of state should act like that. Kings, we might think, should dress up in fine clothes. Kings, we might think, should sit on inaccessible thrones and make rules for all the earth. Kings might believe they should rule, dominate and control all Creation. But Jesus on a human throne is not the Jesus we are called to love.

The Reign of Christ the King was established as a feast day in the 1920s. A feast day declared by a pope still reeling after World War I. Just then, it looked like the human rulers had all gone crazy. Human rulers had thrown soldiers into war like disposable plastic to be used and tossed aside. it looked like the world needed to rebuild, the world needed to heal. Human rulers were so busy asserting their rule; their human control over others that it looked like the craziness would continue forever. European colonialism in Asia and Africa roared. German reparations set the stage for another global war.

And the church said

Careful now, careful now.

Because thrones and might are not how Jesus lived. Domination over others is not how Jesus came into the world. Control is not how Jesus saved the world. Commanding is not how Jesus left the world. That is not how Jesus lived kingship. The authority of Jesus is another kind of power. Jesus is the power of love. The power of relationships. Jesus lived in humility. Jesus saved in self-emptying.

Self-emptying, or kenosis, is giving up your own, human will. Letting go of that human will, which is filled with ego; filled with your own wants and cravings and desires. Letting that go. And in that space, the emptiness where your will once was - to be filled up to overflowing with God’s will. Imagine being filled up with God’s will – and God loves you. Empowered, energized, loved and filled with God’s will.

Self-emptying, letting go of our own wants to let God fill us. That’s also- kind of terrifying. A poem, from the 1920’s reads ‘Courage is fear that has said its prayers.’ (Katie Wilson Baker). It is time to say our prayers and live into another kind of way.

Today we raise up; we celebrate the foolishness of another kind of reign. A different kind of King. The rule of loving neighbors who you always thought of as enemies. The command of loving God. God, who loves lilies and sparrows.

Today is a week after the closing of the United Nations conference of all parties on the Climate (or COP26). A week after, rulers, kings, prime ministers, and presidents gathered in a world that has gone crazy. While Pacific Islands flood and Mexican environmentalists are martyred. While Africans starve and BC storms. My father is now safe in my home, but he cannot return to his own home until roads in BC are fixed after unprecedented rain flooded through soil loosed where trees died in wildfire and heat domes.

Today, I read the final COP documents in which wealthier nations watered down commitments and dampened aid. Aid that is really justice. "Aid" that is really taking responsibility for our own waste and mismanagement.

Today, after I watched rulers throw away the opportunity to save God's Creation. After I watched men dressed in the costumes of authority take the throne of the international stage and use all their mighty power to carefully position promises to their advantage.

Today, let all the disciples of Jesus say

Careful now, careful now. "Watch out that no one deceives you."

Because we might be deceived by the thrones into thinking that we have no power. But Jesus never told his disciples that they had no power. Jesus empowered the disciples and sent them into a world full of kings on thrones and empires in robes of power. But Jesus did not send disciples out to become kings. Jesus sent his followers out into the world to be healers and teachers. When Jesus's followers went out into the world, Jesus told them to start with, 'Peace to this house (Luke 10:1-23).

What if we say to all Creation- Peace to this house.

But then, how do we go about the work of healing? How do we, as disciples of Jesus, teach in a world that looks so broken?

Among the disciples of Jesus arguing for Creation, I hear anger. I am angry. The disciples of Jesus shake the power of their anger against all the thrones of human kings. The disciples of Jesus are raging. They are advocating, protesting, engaging in civil disobedience, going to jail, losing their lives for the sake of justice. And let's be clear, Jesus got angry. When people in authority made doing the right thing difficult, Jesus made a whip of cords and drove those people out of the temple (John 2:14-15). Jesus got angry, and disciples get angry now.

Celebrating the Reign of Christ the King, let us bring our anger to our discipleship. But carefully, carefully. Because while Jesus did get angry, he didn't live his whole life angry. Jesus also prayed quietly; he taught love and justice. Jesus also ate and drank with friends. When the end was near, Jesus made time to break bread with disciples. And after supper, Jesus didn't commission warriors to fight for command and control. Jesus named disciples, friends (John 15:15)

Disciples of Jesus working for Creation can also turn to weeping. These last few weeks, I have been weeping. I have been walking with an international community that is mourning losses. We are marking lost species and disappearing cultures. Right now, disciples are despairing of justice. Desolate, we can become incapacitated by loss. And let us be clear, Jesus wept. At the loss of a friend, Jesus wept. God loves all God's Creation. I suspect the Holy Spirit weeps afresh with every lost species. And right now, biodiversity and species loss are happening at an unprecedented rate. Good-bye, ivory-billed woodpecker, good-bye Little Mariana fruit bats, good-bye yellow-blossom pearly mussel.

Celebrating the Reign of Christ, the King let us bring our sorrow to our discipleship. But carefully, carefully. Because while Jesus did weep, he then got up and healed. Jesus took action. Jesus didn't stay in despair. He wept and then walked into a dark tomb, and he healed. And he healed.

These past weeks while I have virtually watched the climate conference, I have seen many human rulers. And I have felt angry, and I have felt despair. I have witnessed the desire for authority, control, and power with such hubris that it seems to think it can put human desires before or above God's Creation. And I have felt anger, and I have felt despair.

And I am afraid. Afraid for my family, for my children growing into this world. Afraid for our community here in BC, afraid for all Creation.

On the Feast of Christ the King, we the church remember and celebrate that we are called to understand power in another way. We say Christ is King. And we paint pictures of Jesus on a mighty throne dressed in the robes of power. We might so be tempted to understand Jesus through images of human kings. Imagine Jesus by looking at how our rulers try to control, to imagine Jesus dominating.

But thrones and might are not how Jesus lived. Domination over others is not how Jesus came into the world. Tight control is not how Jesus saved the world. Commanding is not how Jesus left the world. That's not how Jesus lived kingship. The authority of Jesus is another kind of power. It is the power of love found in relationships. Jesus lived in humility. Jesus saved in self-emptying.

Courage is fear, that’s said its prayers. Let us say our prayers.