

# A Sermon for DaySpring Baptist Church

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“Christ the King”

Daniel 7, John 18, Revelation 1

November 26, 2006

For some people, maybe for most, life is like a merry-go-round. Round and round they go... one day's pretty much like the next. One year like all the others. Oh, they mark time...

The holidays arrive and they move through the same motions as always.

Then they start a new year...

It's winter, spring, summer, fall...

Birthdays here and there...

Another vacation, another semester of school.

The holidays arrive again and they do it again... only with grayer hair this time.

It's a merry-go-round. And lots of them like it... **“it's nice... pretty.”** Some are bored... some are dizzy... some are asleep. All tend to see themselves the same and they see the world the same as they did on the last time round.

Nothing changes.

In *Waiting for Godot*, Samuel Becket says, **“To have lived is not enough, we have to talk about it.”** We don't mature, just because we get older. It requires some reflection and intention and conversation... And it sure helps to be doing that with a community and one committed to the Way of Christ.

That's what the Church Calendar Year is all about. Hallmark doesn't set the agenda, Jesus... his ministry and life among us... does. It goes in a great circle but not like a merry-go-round, though there are familiar motions and scenes along the way... It's not like that pretty and fanciful ride you get on at the fair.

The Church Calendar wants to take you into what is real... and though it does circle it also spirals. Deeper and deeper, down further into what is true... about the gospel story and about yourself and about all that is.

You spiral deeper into truth...

Or better yet, you spiral upward into it... towards this focused and visionary point.

That's why we do all this. It's not just because we like changing colors or because some tradition somewhere a long time ago said it would be important. Or because the rest of the Church is doing it... (though all those reasons are good ones.)

We do it because living on a carousel isn't what we're made for. There's more to know and see and become and it's what God wants for our lives.

So next week we start again... It'll be the first Sunday of the year... Advent... And we'll be waiting for Jesus... The mood will be one of quiet anticipation... of longing and looking and not being sure.

But not today... Today is Christ the King Sunday and today in culmination we declare with Christians all over the world and Christians throughout time, that Christ is King.

Christ is King... It's language of royalty, and really it doesn't connect with us... not like it did with those ancients who first heard it and read it. ... Those who first dreamed it. They got

the glory of it in ways we can't. A throne was the center of a kingdom, and that's what they dreamed of.

And as we think about that and look at these texts, we should be quick to remember that the words of scripture and the meanings of scripture are both important and important to distinguish.

Maximus the Confessor said that **“the words of scripture are the clothes of Christ and their meaning is the body. The words veil and the meaning reveals.”** (Clement, The Roots of Christian Mysticism, 217)

That's especially true when we start handling these apocalyptic texts, and those who pay attention only to the words usually get too literal with things and mess up the meaning in the process and then write books that make a lot of money.

Daniel and John have dreams... Dreams. And they're dreaming about this Kingdom that Jesus tells Pilot isn't of this world. It's a different kingdom, a different realm. And we can't get it or know about it or understand it in the same way we get this kingdom.

So rational thought...

And prosy writing...

And analytical debate...

Aren't of much use.

But poems and songs... lyrics... and imaginative stories are... And dreams are.

And you know how dreams are. They're kind of crazy, aren't they? They are, I believe, a language the soul is using to speak to us about and from that other realm. The one Jesus is talking about and the one we're unconscious of, most of the time.

Dreams want to say something about that realm or from that realm.

I've had two recently, I just have to share with you. The first I had about a week ago, and in it I was directing a Broadway musical, and in the scene there was this kind of chorus line thing happening. And in the chorus line were...

Cameron Jorgenson...

Don Van Meter...

Harrison Roper...

Keith Rollins...

And others... all guys from DaySpring... and all kicking and dancing in a more or less uniform way with one another. And I was directing and coordinating it all. And they were together and they were enjoying it... I swear. You play therapist (or Joseph) and interpret that for me.

The second dream I had a couple of nights ago... I was in a place strange to me. It was a place of ministry, ministry with those who were down and out. ... An inner city kind of environment.

I was there with a community of folks... and we were working so hard, and it was busy and hectic and difficult. There was, I remember, a kind of daycare setting... only it wasn't a very good building and set up. It was messy and not equipped and even felt dangerous.

But we were working hard, and I was very busy taking care of it all. When suddenly it hit me, it washed over me, it shocked me. I remember that I had a baby myself... A child... about 9 months old and I'd forgotten all about her. I wasn't caring for her and bonding with her like I had Abby and Brandt and I ran... Ran to the daycare, this dangerous place, and ran to her crib and picked her up and I was sobbing and felt so bad... and she said, **“Dadddyyyyyy.”** With the biggest smile.

She was too young to speak, just a baby, but she spoke. She knew me and my neglect hadn't changed that. She loved me and my absence hadn't changed that.

Wanna play therapist or SP director with me on that one? I've been real busy, as lots of you know, remodeling my house... I've gotten pretty consumed and exhausted by it. Wonder what the dream is trying to tell me about what matters.

See, it'd be a real mistake to get literal with the words and go tell Julie we're supposed to have a baby... **"Honey, the nest is just too empty."** Just like it'd be a mistake to assume because of my other dream that DaySpring should start a touring musical ministry starring Cameron Jorgenson and Don Van Meter.

And it'd be a mistake to get too hung up on the words of Daniel's dream or John's dream and miss the meaning. Because the meaning is really important.

Daniel has a vision while he was lying in his bed... John is in prayer on the Sabbath. Both see some wild things... similar things... beasts and such. Both see a throne room and a throne and they see One sitting there more powerful and regal and impressive than their words can begin to say.

There's white hair and fire and a book opened and thousands gathered round it. It's like they've all arrived at the center of all things. They're there... finally. There and seeing what is most real. It's all unveiled now.

They see God... the "Ancient of Days," Daniel calls Him.

The One John says, **"who is and who was and who is to come. The Alpha and Omega... beginning and end."**

They see that... they perceive it. And John describes it in Trinitarian terms... **The Eternal One, and the Seven fold Spirit, and Jesus Christ who loves us, has set us free and rules all the earth.**

That's what John sees... what is at the Center of all things, Christ... the Logos. It's what he dreams and knows, even though when he wakes up it may not seem so apparent.

It's hard to see in Pilot's realm. But in the dream it is Christ... **"in whom all things cohere,"** as Paul says it. The One in whom the poets of their time said, **"we live and move and have our being."** That one...

That's the vision they had... what they saw. And it changed them, don't you imagine?

And it's what we want and need to see... and why we keep spiraling round in this sacred circle praying by God's grace we'll know what they know. There's another realm for us to see. The Kingdom of God and it's all around us and within us. And in it, Christ who loves us and has set us free, rules it all. Christ, love Incarnate... is at the center of all things.

When we see that... it changes everything. How we see Christ changes how we see everything. The Saints are those who have spiraled into that perception. Year after year, prayer after prayer, love upon loving.

**"They see the world in God, permeated by his light and forming a whole in the hollow of his hand."** (Clement, 225)

There's a story about Saint Benedict where he was keeping vigil early in the morning before prayers. He was looking out his window into the dark... praying... and suddenly he saw this great light shining, and it drove away the darkness and made everything brighter than day.

Later he described it, saying that **"the whole world was gathered up before his eyes as if in a ray of sunlight."** And Gregory the Great, reading this wondered, **"is it possible for the**

**whole world to be seen in this way by a human being.... where the light enlarges the soul, and it is transported beyond itself.”** (Clement 225)

See, the vision we get from Daniel and John and from worshipping this way year in and year out... isn't just so we'll all say **“yeah Jesus”** and **“I sure can't wait to get up to that throne room... get a robe and sing along.”** It's a vision of that larger realm that changes how we see this realm, and how we live in this realm. It's like Jesus in the Upper Room...John says, “Knowing he'd come from God and would return to heaven, got up and washed their feet.” Knowing he was from God...That's the vision.

And...when you have this vision... you aren't going to get so obsessed with your remodeling. And you won't be worried at all about how different folks are in a church, and whether or not they can dance together.

When you see this, Christ as King, the powers and principalities of this world won't seem so scary to you. Bosses... corporations... terrorists... militaries... violence, that kind of power, isn't what you look to anymore.

This vision changes you.

You don't see people the same way. No need to be jealous.

You don't see yourself the same way. No need to be endlessly affirmed.

You don't see anything the way you saw it.

It's a different realm with different rules and different values. Saying “Christ is King--central--changes things.

I love the way Maximus the Confessor expressed this idea. **“The sun that rises and illumines the world makes itself visible as well as the objects it illumines. It is the same with the Sun of righteousness. When he rises in a mind that has been purified, he makes himself seen in addition to the... objects he has created.”** (*Centuries on Charity.*)

You see the holiness of the world... having seen the Holy One at the center of it all.

I love this line from one spiritual writer: “Christ, by becoming incarnate, has reopened for us the paradisaical dimension of the world. Opaque but transparent, the earth is the paradise which we can reenter by dying and rising with Christ.”

We come to this table in celebration of that great truth and the one who revealed it to us. Thanks be to God...the Earth can be paradise again.

Praise be to God

...the light of Jesus is penetrating and enlarging us.

Praise be to God.

...Christ, the Word Eternal, Love beyond telling...is at the center of all things. So... Come...take all of it...