

Christ the King 2006
November 26, 2006

It's been a good year for the Nebraska Cornhuskers, especially in the publicity department. One might wonder why a team that (unfortunately) hasn't been anywhere near the top ten was getting all the airtime, all the attention. It's been a good year for the Huskers on TV, because they've had a lot of good, dramatic games. If a viewer isn't really invested in one of the teams that's playing—maybe have a favored team that they'd like to see win, but not having it matter very much either way—then what they're going to want is drama: the struggle, the ups and downs, reversals of fortune; they watch because they honestly don't know who will win. So if you can give them a game that really is being decided in the last minute of play—ooh, good drama, good football, good TV. On the other hand, the favorite for the true-blue fan and the worst for the TV executives is the blow-out. Remember the blow-outs? Forty-eight to nothing at the half, could have been double that but we held back a little? Fans streaming out of the stadium early, because it's not like they don't know the outcome of this one; and if the fans—who care about the team—are leaving, do you think the non-invested viewer is going to stay tuned? The blow-out is all about domination; and true domination is pretty rare. Usually, the other team at least puts up a struggle, even if it is futile. But imagine a college team, up against a bunch of fourth graders. THAT would be domination. The college team would determine everything, including whether or not they would allow the fourth graders to have the ball, whether or not they would allow them to ever score. And if the fourth graders did score, it would be because the college team let them.

One of the themes of this week's readings is that of dominion, as in, to dominate. Dominion implies real power, complete and total control over another. In Psalm 93, the psalmist portrays God's dominion over creation: the world depicted as a vast sea, and the sea in scriptures represents chaos. The sea is wild, untamed; man is no match for its waves, its roughness; man can in no way contain the sea or tame the sea. But God can, and he did; he made the land rise up, which in turn kept the sea in its bounds; from out of the chaos, God brought order; he dominated the sea. In the passage from the Book of Daniel, the prophet writes: "one like a Son of man received dominion, glory, and kingship; all peoples, nations, and languages serve him. His is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away." God dominates the entire universe: he created it, he set the parameters within it must operate. *He* decided to give us free will, so that we could love him in return, if he made us robots who had no choice but to love him, well, that wouldn't even fit his definition of love, so what would be the point? He created us with the ability to love so that we would have the ability to enter into communion with others, with each other but mostly with him. And as Daniel wrote, his dominion is everlasting. Satan thought that maybe it wasn't, that maybe he could break God's power and claim it for himself, certainly claim us for himself by leading us into sin. Satan thought *he* could dominate, but Satan was wrong. Satan brought man death, because he knew that God is the God of the living; Christ restored life, and in doing so, put down Satan's power over us forever.

Most people who have jobs have a boss to whom they must answer; some people are their own bosses, but most of us have someone higher up to account to. The boss has a lot of power: he, or she, gets to tell employees what to do, how to do it, when to do it. And the employee then has a choice: he can support the boss and the boss' efforts, get on board with plans and project, play up the positive aspects of things; or he can undermine the boss. Go behind the bosses' back and criticize every little thing he does, point out the boss' flaws, make the case for how the boss is wrong about everything. It happens all the time in the workplace, it's called grumbling. And some of it may even be justified; jerks and idiots do land into positions of authority every now and again. But all the grumbling in the world doesn't change the fact that the boss is still the boss; what the employee determines, by his attitude, is how happy he is going to be on the job. If all you do is oppose your boss at every turn, you probably won't end up terribly happy on the job. In a much more profound way, this is the world's relationship with the Almighty: God is God, and we need to determine if we are going to get on board with his plan or not, if we're going to accept his design or oppose it at every turn. Remember when Ted Turner—he who is on record as saying that Christians are buffoons—said, with a straight face—that the Ten Commandments are “outdated”? It came off as blatant and offensive to Christians at the time, but honestly, is it an unrealistic reflection of how most people today live, including nominal Christians? Christ is King, make no doubt about it. What we're doing now, the statement that we're making with our choices, our lives, our actions is whether or not we are happy to have him as king, or if we're unhappy with him as king. And if we take it upon ourselves to reconfigure the king, and twist his words so that they don't seem to mean what he has always meant them to mean, it doesn't mean we're happy with him as king, rather it means that we're happy with this other king we've created. But any other king does not have dominion, and any king we create and then label as God does not have the power to save us.

In his exchange with Pontius Pilate, Jesus said “for this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” Unlike Pontius Pilate, Jesus' church has never struggled with the idea of truth. We believe in objective reality: that what *is*, truly is because it was created by God, in whom is the fullness of truth. His Church preaches that there is a right and there is a wrong, a correct understanding of things or a misunderstanding of things. Truth is not found in us, and it is not a matter of consensus; it is found in God, and our charge is to learn it. Being Catholic means, then, belonging to the truth; that is the first and foremost reason why we belong to the Church. Adhering to God's teachings is not always easy, and our services and our music and the homilies are not always all that polished, and yeah, you can find more polished elsewhere; and the people of God who make up this Church are not always kind, and affirming, or Christ-like; but we stay, because we believe that this is true. To walk away from the Church is such a serious deal, because to walk away from the Church is to walk away from the Eucharistic, from Jesus' very True Presence here on earth. And

that, in turn, is to walk away from the Truth, because it's a statement that one believes either that Jesus cannot, does not, or chooses not to turn bread and wine into his Body and Blood. Many leave because they give it no real thought; but if we belong to this, we would never accept anything else in its place.

It's easy for someone to say that they're loyal to their boss, but the real proof will be, not in their words of declaration, but in their actions: do they do what the boss wants, and do it without undermining him, and making him look bad or ineffective even as the work gets done? And so in our faith, our words will mean relatively little, next to our actions. Our attitude towards God, and towards all that he's revealed, and to all of his commandments, and to the teachings of his Church, will be our statement of whom we belong to: the Truth, or to this passing world. Christ is King, and he dominates all other powers and forces in creation. The essence of eternal damnation is regretting that he is, in fact, king; the essence of eternal bliss is to rejoice in that one, same, unwavering, eternal fact: that Christ is King, and that his dominion will last forever.

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