

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Well, my incredibly thoughtful fiancé, Mark Lieberman, surprised me on a starry night this summer while we sat around a fire talking about our future. Apparently, months before that night, we'd been watching some historical fiction about royalty. I don't remember saying it, but apparently, I happened to mention how I thought that the title Lady would sound very good before my name. Well, he didn't forget that offhanded little joke, that comment I made. He discovered after some research that it's possible to be granted this title in Scotland by purchasing a very small plot of land so he did that.

He got a small piece of land for us in Blairadam Forest in Scotland, which makes us technically landowners and therefore grants us titles of Lord and Lady. I have the exact Google coordinates of this little plot of land that we hope to visit one day, have a picnic and get some photos, but for now, feel free to call me Lady Rebecca. Now, while this was purely fun, obviously a great gift, it did lead me to want to look into a little bit more about the origins of these titles, titles like Lady and Lord, to understand where they came from. On this day of Christ the King Sunday, we proclaimed Jesus as King and of Lord.

In fact, King of kings and Lord of lords as our collect says. Christ the King Sunday actually began back in 1925. It was designated then when the world was, as we know, gripped by nationalists, anti-Semitic, authoritarian fascist dictators following the first World War, moving into World War II. Pope Pius instituted this as a day, and it's the last day of our church year. Advent begins next Sunday, but as a day to help us focus on why we're here, that we are here to reflect the love of God and Christ our king, and to remind us not to place our trust, our hope in early leaders or powers.

What does kingship and lordship mean in our context now, as Christians? The concept of Lord and King generally I learned in my studies refers to simply of course one having authority or power or

rule. But actually, the word Lord itself comes from an old English word hlāford, and it referred to generally a chieftain, and it meant someone who provided bread to their followers. This would be the person who would ensure people had enough to eat providing bread. Then under the feudal system, it came to be used to refer to landowners in a similar way that we still speak of like landlords. In this way it continues to be used in Scotland for owners of land.

There's also the House of Lords, right? The Upper House of Parliament, the UK? Of course we have the Lords Temporal and the Lords Spiritual. The Lords Spiritual refers of course to the church's bishops and of course the archbishop, and particularly the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is the head of our church, who is the head of the Anglican communion. Indeed, bishops here today in the US can properly be addressed as my Lord or as my Lord bishop, which I think most of us would prefer not to do.

If it's combining secular, powerful authoritarian title with the church makes you feel a little uncomfortable, I think rightly so, and you're not alone. I visited London some years ago and I just happened on the same day to go from looking at the crown jewels at the Tower of London and I walked then over to St. Paul's Cathedral to see an exhibit of gold and jeweled bishop's miters, and croziers. I just realized in an instant how much those resembled the royal crown and scepter. That is no accident, and it deeply troubled me. I remember sitting on the Tube and just being like fighting tears. It troubled me because I thought, I pondered church history, of course, as we know, and I'm not going to do a whole lesson on church history, but church history has a way that the church has gotten this wrong.

This concept of kingship and lordship, even we as individual followers by equating it to this idea of earthly rule and power. We as a people throughout the scriptures as well, as well as throughout our history, have so often tied power and wealth and control with the idea of Christianity, of Christ's kingship, and it's had very bad results. Jesus of

course demonstrates just the exact opposite of this in the gospel. This begs the question, if Jesus is Christ the King, then what do we, the royal family, what do we as children and followers of the king then of God's family? What do we look like? How do we live that?

The gospel offers us a very different portrayal of the lordship, of kingship than we see in the world. You might have even felt a bit startled to hear me read from the gospel this morning as we do on this day, Jesus' crucifixion while bearing the title of King. Do you want to know what the church's King of Kings and Lord and Lords looks like? Well, it doesn't look like somebody wearing a jeweled crown, wielding power over others. Our King? What does our King look like?

Well, there he is for us on a cross suffering, naked, bleeding, hanging on the cross and dying, giving his very body and blood and life for the sake of love: a king who meets us every day in scripture and in Eucharist, his body and blood given for us, for God's work of redemption and salvation. Even our Christus Rex here at St. James, Christ, the King triumphant, more triumphant than maybe some other crucifix, but even this one reminds us, our king wearing that crown was hung and nailed to a cross. Notice the nails in his hands, the symbol of sacrificial love.

I think we can do a pretty good job of honoring God as king, Christ as king. Think of all the things we do in our liturgy, like we just stood up in reverence for the Gospel, to hear Jesus' word, or the way we bow in prayer, the way we kneel in confession or at the altar, all showing that reverence. It's clear though that we as a church and followers of Jesus haven't done such a good job historically of really emulating our Lord because Jesus shows us that lordship and kingship, the kind of kingdom that we are being urged to make present.

What do we say in our Lord's prayer? We say, without thinking, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done." Why are we praying for? Because it is not an invitation into earthly power but an invitation

into service honor. Our King and Lord fed the hungry. How are we hope and how do we feed the hungry? Our Lord and King healed the sick. How do we work on the healing of others? Our King and Lord washed the feet of others. How do we offer up humble service? Our King and Lord showed us grace and love for his enemies. Remember praying for them on the cross? How do we love those who hate and revile us?

Our King and Lord gave his body and blood and very life for the sake of others. How do we give ourselves for others? Our King and Lord was born in a stable. He led and ministered without a place to rest his head without a home. How and what are we called to give up for God? Particularly important question in his time of stewardship, but our King and Lord, he held nothing back. How can we follow that incredible example of giving?

You see, Jesus takes that title, this earthly concept of Lord, of King, and then he turns it upside down completely. We as the church are called to do likewise and we have the honor of being children of God, of being children of the king. That gives us incredible responsibility in this call to humble service.

Finally, as we note that these titles, titles like Lady and Lord, they originally meant and referred to people who gave bread to their followers. We see that maybe that title of Lord in its origin, is exactly descriptive of Jesus. Jesus our Lord, the one who gives and feeds us bread, the living bread in holy Eucharist, feeding us his very body, the body of Christ, the bread. So, be fed today, be fed by your Lord the way of love, know it's for God and Jesus is Christ the king, and he is worthy of honor and praise and glory. Hallelujah.