

Kingdom of Priests
Revelation 1:4b-8
November 24, 2024

Today we are at the last Sunday in the church year. Yes, the first Sunday of Advent is coming up next week. Get ready for the soup and sandwich Midweek suppers. Wait, we have Thanksgiving before all that. I guess I am getting a little ahead of myself.

Today we are talking of priests again. We have heard about Jesus being the Great High Priest over the past few weeks but today we are focusing on the other priests. There were quite a few who assisted in the services of bringing the Word of forgiveness and joy to the people. You can imagine with all the animals and the blood and the fires and cleaning, it must have taken quite a few more hands to deal with it all.

We know that the priests all came from the tribe of Levi. They were not given a portion of the promised land but were to be given from the other tribes as they brought their offerings to the Lord.

In the reading for today, we see the expression, "Kingdom, priests to His God and Father". Where do these priests come from? Jesus, who it says: loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood. It says He made **us** a kingdom of priests.

The Levites were just one of the tribes but here we read that we, as Christians are a kingdom. We are a kingdom ruled by a King, overseen by the Great High Priest. Yes, He is to rule our lives as we live them out doing what He as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, *2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

The priests in the temple or tabernacle were to work. Yes, there was plenty to do and we as a kingdom of priests are to work as well. In some ways we aren't to worry about what we have on this earth as what we are looking forward to is the possession we have in heaven.

Christ, the text says, is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him. Yes, that day, judgement day will come and everyone who has ever lived will see Him and recognize that He is the Savior of the world, even though there will be those, like those who pierced Him who will recognize Him and because they didn't believe, they will wail or the word could be translated "mourn" on account of Jesus being the judge. It seems

to make the point that those who didn't believe are now past changing their minds, as they now see how they were wrong to reject Him.

Maybe that is why this text was picked for the last Sunday in the Church year. The last Sunday as if there isn't another one. The last time you are going to hear from Jesus about what He has done and how you fit into His plan for you and for the world you live in. Also, then, the last time you have a chance to tell others of what a great and loving God He is, who would think so much of His creation, especially the pinnacle of His creation, **YOU**, that He would come to earth, to live the life you couldn't live so that you could be saved and look forward to this day, the day Jesus comes in the clouds to separate the sheep from the goats and welcome you, with your glorified body, into a new heaven and earth prepared for you.

I know you probably have thought about or maybe someone has asked, if you could design that day, how would it look? If you knew that Jesus was coming in the clouds tomorrow, what would your day be like?

What phone calls, what emails, what texts would you send out? What words would you have to say to your loved ones, to your neighbors, to those you know do not know Jesus and what is coming?

We don't have much of that when the surface of the earth was destroyed the last time. We have Noah and his family, 8 in all, who were the only humans to survive, to continue to live. We don't know how long it took to build the ark and who all worked on it. We know Noah and his sons probably did a lot of the work but did they hire others? We don't know. It took a long time to build it. Some have thought it took up to 100 years to build it. It really isn't clear how long it took but it was quite a while. If it was around that 100 year manufacturing timeline, that would have been about 10% of his life as he lived 950 years in all.

Noah was told 7 days before the waters came from the rain and from the depths of the earth that everything was going to die. God knew that it would only be Noah and his family that would survive along with two of some, male and female and 7 of some. Those of you who have gone to the life sized Ark in Kentucky have seen and have read about how Noah and the rest of the family took care of those many animals. I haven't been there yet but it is one of the few things on my bucket list of things to do.

They must have been asked about the ship and why they were building it but with only his family entering the ark, any warning that Noah did, didn't seem to have any

effect. The Lord had this to say about the times Noah lived: *Genesis 6:5-8 The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him to His heart. So the Lord said, I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.*

We think of Noah and his family as beginning anew after the flood. It might also bring to mind another of God’s chosen people and that is Abram who was later to be called Abraham. He was chosen to be the father of all believers after the flood when he was chosen by God even though he was a believer in a different god. God chose him and told him to go to a new land. What did Abram do? He listened to the Lord and went. Note the progression: Abram, unbeliever, God picks Abram, Abram does what God tells him to do. Could Abram have rejected what God had told him to do? Yes, he could have but instead, he listened to God and did what the Lord wanted him to do.

We think that we might tell others if we only had one day left before Christ comes again in the clouds but even though we tell, do we know if they will accept what we tell them? No, we don’t. They can reject what we tell them, in fact they will reject it without faith which has to be given by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has to do His work first and then what we say can take root and grow by the power of the same Holy Spirit.

So as we think of what we would do in that day, what did Jesus say about bringing the Word to the world? *Matthew 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

We know these verses very well. We know that we are to make disciples by baptizing and teaching. That is the how of it all but we do this understanding that Jesus is with us in all of this by His Holy Spirit through the Word and the sacraments.

Most of you have heard of one of the last things I did in South Dakota before I came to Alamogordo after accepting the call to become your next pastor. I had a funeral for a guy who only had become a Christian later in life, I think he was still in his 60’s. Previously I had told the people in the little congregation in one of my three churches that I knew they had many people in the neighborhood they knew who weren’t

Christians but I said it would be easier if they picked out one or two and prayed for them and that I would eventually get to their houses as I would go down the road and stop by homesteads that still had people living there.

One day I was out in that neighborhood and stopped by a home and knocked on the door and was welcomed in. I visited for a little while, finding out about them and their background. During the conversation, the man of the house asked what it would take to be baptized and join the church. Now, I had never brought up baptism, he did. The Holy Spirit had already been to that house, to him and his wife as when I knocked on the door, they were ready to hear of Jesus and His work on their behalf.

They went through the classes and he was baptized and they became members of the church. I learned after that from the neighbors that had been praying for them that I would have never gotten into his house if I had knocked on their door a couple years earlier. God in His timing had me drive down that road and turn into that driveway and knock on that door that day.

This is a great account of the Holy Spirit working in lives we come in contact with but there is like Paul Harvey of radio fame used to say: "There is the rest of the story".

This guy had emphysema and would have to go to the hospital every once in awhile to have his lungs pumped out. One time when he was there for the treatment in a hospital in a neighboring town, I visited with him and also visited with the other guy in the next bed who was there with his wife visiting.

I visited and I probably asked for prayer requests other than for each of them. I left and thought to myself I would get down to this other town some day to visit this couple. I didn't and regretted that I hadn't as I noticed that his death notice was in the paper a while later.

At the next Winkel, the circuits pastor conference the pastor who is now the called pastor, where I was in South Dakota, told of a family in his congregation whose parents were not Christians. One day he gets a call from the Dad who wanted to know what it took to become a member? Evidently my guy talked to him and his wife and they were led to believe in the same Jesus that my guy came to believe.

Today may be the last day before Jesus comes again. Even if it isn't, we have the opportunity to let others know who Jesus is and that He wants them to come be with Him forever. As members of His kingdom of priests, that is our work until that day.