

Fritz Eichenberg, an artist who primarily worked with wood engraving, has a famous piece entitled "The Christ of the Breadlines." It depicts Jesus, standing in line at a soup kitchen. He's about 4th in the line and according to the art piece, it's at night and probably during winter as everyone in line is waiting with jackets or blankets wrapped around, hands in pockets. Jesus is waiting in line with the others, looking a bit raggedy just like everyone else, heads pointed down waiting for a warm meal. The only light source is the halo around Christ's head, and it lights up the details of everyone else while Jesus remains a shadow.

What's striking about this image is that the others are standing right next to the God of the universe, *and they might not even know it*. They're waiting in line for that slight reprieve from hunger and the cold of winter, just like Christ.

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it..... to me.'

Our gospel lesson today tells us that if there ever is to be a day of judgement, you will not be judged on how much you know, the denomination you were a part of, or your church attendance. I assure you, you will not be checked on your church attendance on YouTube during 2020....

What does ultimately matter is how you treated others.

At the end of days, the most important question is:

*Did you see Jesus Christ in the face of someone else?*

On this Christ the King Sunday, we are reminded how Jesus chooses to reign...

Not this distant deity on a throne in the sky, but someone who steps down low enough to be *right there*... in the brokenness, grief and suffering of daily life, standing in line at a soup kitchen

What other kings do you know.....know what it's like to be hungry? To be in prison? To be un-welcomed?

Because the kingdom of God, starts... with the powerless

It starts with those who, as Howard Thurman, says, have their backs up against the wall.

It **starts**... with those who are incarcerated.

It starts with the over a million displaced Palestinians who have nowhere else to go

It starts with the migrant families that our living in our Boston Logan airport because they are on a wait list for the state's shelter program

It starts..... with anyone that our society tends to push aside

Just like the art piece christ of the breadlines, Christ is in the prison, Christ is walking right now with the Palestinians who've lost their home, friends and families, and Christ is sleeping in our Boston Logan airport

On this Christ the King Sunday, we are reminded how Jesus chooses to reign....

Not with a sword, or a bomb, or a fighter jet

**God reigns** *by identifying with the least of these*

Visiting the sick. Visiting those in prison. Giving food to hungry. Welcoming the stranger.

These are not metaphors. We're not do something *like* visiting the sick, we're to do it because that is what it means to encounter Christ

Were not supposed to do these things because that's what Jesus would do, it is what Jesus would do, but it goes further than that.

We are to do these things because *that's where Jesus is.*

We don't learn to love in the abstract, but in the particular. "The hungry" "the sick" "the poor" are actually people, with names, faces, and dreams.

Will you find God in church? You might. Will you find God out there in the world?  
**Absolutely.**

The Bible tells us so.

The good news of Christ is **not** that God delivers us from our suffering, but that God is **with us** in our suffering.

This is the final sunday before we enter Advent, we're at the end of our liturgical church calendar where we are reminded of how God in Christ chooses to reign — not a throne in the sky, and not a throne in a palace, but by coming to us in the form of a vulnerable ... baby.... Who's holy family is a poor migrant family who has nowhere else to go.

If we take the incarnation seriously, then we never know when we will encounter Christ next

In the gospel lesson there are two groups — one that was already feeding and welcoming and visiting and another that was not.

Both groups end up surprised.

The first because they find out that they were caring for Christ all along and they did not know it.

The second because they did not realize that Christ would hang out in the places they don't like to go

You don't have to look that far to find Christ, we get some clues here

Its about making ourselves available and then being open to risk taking

In the culture of that day, being seen with the prisoner or the sick person meant risking your social status

It meant giving something up for the sake of Christ.

This isn't mere charity we are talking here, it's a lot more like *solidarity*.

In the art piece, Jesus isn't depicted as the one handing out the soup, but the one waiting in line *with* the people.

Solidarity takes more time, can be uncomfortable, maybe even unsafe.

But we are told, this is where we encounter Christ. And how others might encounter Christ in us.

It seems more important...perhaps now more than ever to ask ourselves this question: Are we looking for Jesus Christ in the face of someone else?

May this be said.... *of us*

**Epiphany** — I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.

Amen.