

**Christ Church, Georgetown**  
**Sunday, November 20, 2016**  
**The Rev. Kristen Hawley**  
**Slinky Theology**

On this last Sunday of our liturgical year, the Feast of Christ the King or the Reign of Christ... we gather together to worship. To worship a King that made the most unlikely of kings, both to his enemies and his subjects. To worship a King who taught and preached a kingdom of peace, love and unity to a people consumed by division, tribalism and self. To worship a King whose final act of love and salvation was made in the agony of dying a criminal's death on a cross.

Unlike the earliest Christians who risked their lives to worship this man, this God, whom they came to call their King... we live in relative safety and can confess our faith from any street corner without fear of punishment or death. We can wear our faith in Him openly, can share it with anyone, shout it from the rooftops if we'd like. We can write about our faith in Jesus, wear it on t-shirts, go door to door in our neighborhoods and hand out bibles and church brochures... we can tattoo it on our bodies, erect crosses and manger scenes in our front lawns and evangelize other drivers with vanity tags and bumper stickers.

Those of you who have been in my office might recognize some of these. I, my friends, am a lover and collector of Jesus and church tchotchkes and I have brought a few for show and tell, this morning. I brought my squeezey, *Jesus is my Rock*, our families', *Mary of the Hood*, who blesses us all from her place on the range hood and oversees all cooking at the Hawley home. I brought the "*Jesus, My Shining Hope*" lollipop and this little guy who is, "*Wild About Jesus*". This "*He Lives*" mini slinky is the newest addition to my collection. Truth be told, I'm not sure where it came from, but it showed up in our house this week and I have claimed it.

It is this last tchotchke that I want to talk about today – the one that has suddenly appeared and been on my mind and in my prayers this week as I have been puzzling out this homily. As I watch our nation and others compete in the "who can be the most divided and contentious country in the world," contest, and grieve basic kindnesses and connections that seem to have been swept away by tribalism, fear and modern golden calves... I wonder about my new slinky and its message. Upon it are three crosses and the words, *He Lives. He Lives. He* – who is he, and why do we care if he lives? The assumption inherent in the toy is that we all know who *He* is and why it matters that, though the three crosses stand as testimony against us... that he lives is our promise of Paradise and our marching orders to live into the fullness of his image.

All of this, proclaimed on this one little orange slinky. The fundamental truths of God, Son, our sinfulness and his salvation, all wrapped up in a toy that cost probably no more than 10 cents to make, and was found kicking around my living room with assorted Legos, loose change and the other flotsam of a family of six – while we, as citizens, as neighbors, as friends appear to have forgotten all of it. Who *He* was and is, who we are and are called to be, that our salvation is rooted in a Savior who called us out of division, out of ourselves, out of hatred and fear. We – a people who have every freedom to proclaim our truths, to live them without fear, to worship together, to have slinkies emblazoned with a cross and the scandalous, liberating and saving truth of our King – *He Lives!* – are trapped again by sin and selfishness, by golden calves and the sin of trying to be kings ourselves... and our world is poorer for it.

Do you know that the Feast of Christ the King is one of our newest feast days, established by papal encyclical in 1925 by Pope Pious the eleventh? Yes, friends, today's feast day was

instituted to advance the message of Jesus Christ over and against the political and social forces in the world at the time, that seemed to threaten humanity. WWI was over and the seeds were being sown for the Great Depression and WWII. Fear was being spread throughout Europe by groups bent on triumph at all costs, neighbors turning on neighbors, and in the US we found ourselves in our first ever “consumer society” where the roaring twenties ushered in mass culture where all could be king and there was less need for God or God’s church.

Pope Pious instituted this Feast day as a reminder to all Christians that we are called to a greater cause than self. As servants of Jesus Christ and laborers in God’s Kingdom... we are to be baptized into the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and marked as his own forever. To belong to such a King, we are called to profess Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to following the teachings of the church, to break bread and pray, to resist evil, to seek forgiveness, to proclaim! to proclaim our King with our words and in our actions, to seek Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves and to strive for justice and peace among all, respecting the God given dignity of every human being. This is the promise we make to our King. All found in the simple message of a slinky.

Just as the world in the 20s was crying out for a reminder of these truths, so too do we cry out on this Feast of Christ the King. For I fear that we have forgotten. I read and listen to the news, I see the Facebook feeds, I hear the arguments, see the tears and wonder – where are the people tasked with building peace, love and unity? Where have we gone?

Friends. Pope Pious has given us all a gift: a gift far better than an orange slinky. A wake up call to the church each year that we are a people of love, a people of peace and a people of unity... because we belong to the *He who lives*, Jesus Christ the King and are offered, as many times as it takes, forgiveness and the opportunity to try again. So let us feast at His Table, worship Him together and leave this place reminded that we are called, not to division, but to help heal this broken and beautiful world. To serve *He who lives* so that we might live... Jesus Christ the King. Amen.