

Christ the King yr C 2022
2 Samuel (5:1-3) Colossians (1:11-20) Luke (23:35-43)

And so we come to the end of the church year. The readings always pointed to the culmination of our earthly journey being with Christ sharing his risen life with all the saints. However it was only in 1925 that this Sunday was formally declared Christ the King Sunday. It was intended by the church to be an overt warning against the tide of totalitarianism of the time and prescient of course with the rise of fascism alongside communism and worship of human systems and leaders. You may rightly gaze at the world today and say this warning is needed no less strongly.

There is an apocryphal story from the middle ages of two peasants observing their king in all his finery passing by and one says to the other “I long to see the day when royalty are treated as common people.” His friend turns to him and he says, “I long to see the day when common people are treated like royalty.”

The point of today is that we are to see this second vision made reality in the kingdom of God. In Matthews Gospel of course in parable Jesus says whatever you do to the least you do to me. Our journey’s end is not to gaze at a distant glorious splendid vision of Christ in majesty but to fulfil our calling to be part of that royal priesthood. We will shortly turn again to the incarnation and the amazing humility of God to be born as one of us that we might be lifted up to be like Him.

In today’s gospel we are reminded of the risk and cost of such a journey. In Luke the throne is the cross from which Christ pours out his love for the least – the amazing words for the good thief are for you and me.

Next May we will all have the opportunity to see a coronation that of new King Charles. It is promised to be a more modest affair than his mother’s though I’m sure the health and safety police would never have allowed 8000 people in Westminster Abbey these days anyway. We are fortunate as although our coronations change from age to age there are certain marks that remain. Anointing for a purpose, oaths before God to serve, allegiance to God before all else, knowing that just as there can be no sacrament without the peoples amen in the mass there can be no coronation without the peoples vivat rex, assent and consent. Above all else to know that always the cross is higher and sits upon the crown.

In a world where political parties, regimes and dictators seem to laud it over their subjects these are a principles we should without arrogance, be proud of, be grateful for and not take for granted.

Jesus on the cross shows that to God, there's no true royalty in this world unless everyone is treated like royalty. God's creates not rubbish and nobodys but wonderful things and people in his image. Today's gospel that we read on Christ the King is in different ways by all the four gospel writers to be a description of Jesus our Lord's coronation – and it is on the cross.

The authorities think they are mocking and play acting in a gruesome way with royal tokens. For God in Christ it is no act. It is a mirror to the sin and despair of the world that can and will be defeated.

The soldiers after they get done scourging him and beating him, they sit him down and they find a crown of thorns for him and they kneel before him. And they put a purple cloak around him, because it's the sign of royalty. And they put a sceptre, a reed, in his hand, because he is the King of the Jews. And they even have a sign written by Pilate himself saying, "INRI, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." And then they prepare his throne and he has to carry it up a hill.

When he gets there, his throne is laid out before him and they nail him to it and they put him up and they all start jeering and making fun of the King of the Jews saying, "You saved others, how come you can't save yourself?" Indeed why not – surely a true king would?

The answer comes in the form of love. For the thief and for you and me. It will mean different things to us as we journey on in this life but to hold fast to it to embrace it to carry it not just in the mind but the reality of all of life it will have power and authority over all things. It always speaks of Gods Kingdom and invites us to live as heirs not mere pawns and subjects in the play of worldly power.

What power there is to know that the Lord of Lord and King of Kings has made you his priority and has given his life for you. Yes it begs a response. Will God and his kingdom be our priority and how will we use our life? Unlike with earthly kings rulers and regimes your freedom will never be taken away – but true and eternal freedom though will only be found in his service as he has served and loved you.