

St George's Christ the King 25 11 18

Over Remembrance week end we heard the National Anthem sung a good number of times. As a little girl God save the King was played at the end of television transmission for the day and always performances at theatre or cinema began or concluded with the National Anthem. When I was turning out things in the loft preparation for moving and I found a box with some old pennies with the heads of different Kings and Queens one bore Queen Victoria's image others George the fifth and George the sixth and some with our present Queen's head on them.

Going to different churches I encounter Altar copies of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer some of which are very old and precious, and many have prayers for the King and it keeps me on my toes as I substitute our present Queens name and alter him to her and he to she as I read the liturgy. Its easier when the book is from the Victorian era at least its only the name of the Queen I have to alter.

To day we celebrate Not an earthly king with all that that entails but the Feast of Christ the King

Often amongst the stain glass windows in a church depicting the saints and events in the earthly life of Christ or characters from the bible , you will find a window of Christ Pantocrator Christ sitting enthroned in glory.

Christ, Almighty and all powerful King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Depicted in these windows is the king we sing about in hymns like

O worship the king all glorious above

Crown him with many crowns the lamb upon the throne.

As the church's year draws to its end we are reminded that the baby born in a manger who live on earth, died on a cross and rose again. Ascended to reign in glory and promised to return.

Common Worship provides seasonal material to be used for significant days in the church's calendar. Let me I just remind you of what the introduction to this resource says:-

“The liturgical year ...provides a structure for the Church’s collective memory, a way of concentrating our human experience of time in the celebration of God’s work – in Christ and in human beings through Christ – a work which is both unrepeatably in time and incomprehensibly beyond time.The rhythm of the church’s times and seasons also affects those who take part in them.

It is one of the primary ways in which Christians learn, and are strengthened in their grasp of the story of Christ.”

In worship we remember events from the past and we experience in a paradox of time these events for ourselves as a present reality and a future hope. The colours for each season help us visually to identify these different parts of the church’s year. Purple for penitence and preparation used in Advent and Lent, White or Gold for celebration such as

Easter and Christmas, Green the colour of living things which grow, is used in what we call ordinary time and Red for martyrs and of course today as we celebrate Christ the King.

Next week the new church year begins with the season of Advent, the liturgical colour will change to purple as we observe a time of preparation not just to celebrate again the incarnation but to make ourselves ready for Christ's second coming in glory. And so, as we end the year thinking about Christ the King we come full circle.

But what does all this mean for us who pray each day your kingdom come.

Over and over again in the gospels we hear of Jesus speaking about the Kingdom. Many of the parables explain to his listeners what The Kingdom of heaven is like..... but, in today's Gospel reading we hear unequivocally that Jesus kingdom is not of this world. In his interrogation by Pilate we encounter two very different types of power: the power of Pilate and the power of Jesus. Pilate holds power and authority over the people under his

jurisdiction. Confronted with Jesus he wants to know if he is facing a challenge to this power.

Jesus reply turns the question away from the kingly title and answers it in terms of the Kingdom which he states is nothing to do with earthly power or authority but with the truth. This kingdom is not a place but a rule which transcends time and space.

At the beginning of his ministry out in the wilderness, Jesus resisted the temptation of earthly power and later in the garden of Gethsemane he wrestled with the temptation to take the easy way, yet made the choice to do his fathers will as he prayed “your will not mine be done”

He chose the way of the cross so that we might become citizens of his heavenly kingdom.

A few hours later at the moment of his greatest vulnerability a criminal recognised in the dying Jesus, the King of Kings as he said the word’s “Remember me when you come into your kingdom”.

Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world”

but we can glimpse it around us when compassion and love are shown to others. As Rosaline Brown so succinctly puts it
“We worship a God whose idea of Kingship is being involved in compassionate action.”

The incarnate Christ set us the perfect example in his treatment of the marginalised, the oppressed, the forgotten.

And it is in the faces of these people that we are called to see the face of Christ and love them as He loves us.

For the kingdom’s foundation is built on love

The command ‘To love our neighbours’

is to love the One in whose image they, and we, are made.

And our vocation as Christians is to recognise the divine image in their faces, whenever and wherever we encounter them.

Sidney Carter's hymns asks,

"When I needed a neighbour were you there ...and the creed and the colour and the name won't matter were you there??"

St Teresa of Avila said

"Christ has no body now on earth but yours,
no hands but yours,
no feet but yours,
yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion
is to look out to the earth,
yours are the feet by which He is to go about doing good
and yours are the hands by which He is to bless us now."

And so we pray your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Amen

