

WORSHIP 21/11/21

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome all to this morning's worship. Today is the celebration of Christ the King and we will be thinking about how Jesus turns the ideas about power and wealth associated with Kingship on its head. For Jesus is not only King of Kings but a servant King.

PRAYER FOR TODAY – THE COLLECT

Heavenly Lord,
you long for the world's salvation:
stir us from apathy,
restrain us from excess
and revive in us new hope
that all creation will one day be healed
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

HYMN: CROWN HIM WITH MANY CROWNS

READINGS

Revelation 1:4-8 NIV

John,
To the seven churches in the province of Asia:
Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.
To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

“Look, he is coming with the clouds,”
and “every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him”; and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.”
So shall it be! Amen. “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

John 18:33-37 NIV

Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

REFLECTION

There are so many things I love about Jesus and on this Sunday where we celebrate Christ the King, we remember that Jesus, amongst other things came to show us something about how He is King and what His Kingdom is like, for as He says, it is "from another place".

We are told in our first reading from Revelations that Jesus is the ruler of the kings of the earth. Well, it turns out these days there are not that many Kings (or Queens) of this earth. Out of 195 countries there are only 44 countries with a monarch as Head of State. There are 13 in Asia, 12 in Europe, 10 in North America, 6 in Oceania and 3 in Africa.

I don't know much about the monarchs in other countries, but I do know a little about our Queen. It seems to me that she is a godly woman, who takes her role as subject to God seriously. She seems to epitomise the virtues that Paul in his letter to Timothy describes as the important things in living a Christian life, to "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith."

These are some of the very virtues that Jesus himself epitomised in His earthly life. Jesus was a man who dealt gently with the broken people of this earth, the outcast, the blind, the women, the beggars and those who were grieving for the death of their loved ones. He had compassion for the rich and poor alike, realising how great wealth can hinder people in their faith. See the parable of the rich young man, recounted in the Gospel of Matthew 19:16–30, the Gospel of Mark 10:17–31 and the Gospel of Luke 18:18–30.

Jesus certainly had endurance. According to The New Testament, the principal locations for the ministry undertaken by Jesus were Galilee and Judea, with activities also taking place in surrounding areas such as Peres and Samaria. Christian texts refer to Jesus walking 3,125 miles during his ministry, which was just over 3 years! I do as many miles per year in my car and I think I am hard done by!!!

Of course, He had not only physical endurance but emotional and spiritual endurance as well. He wept for the state Jerusalem was in, at the death of his friend Lazarus, and on that terrible night of agony in the garden of Gethsemane. The night when He faced the agony of accepting the fate, he knew he must endure, to save humanity from its sin, to take the punishment that we each should have to endure.

He took this from us all so we could be at peace with God. Also knowing that this sacrifice would not be recognised by all peoples.

He was never afraid to speak truth to power. Notice how he answers Pilate, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

Jesus also points out to Pilate that, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

He was never afraid to challenge those who abused power, as in Matthew 23:27.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean.”

Indeed, His Kingship and Kingdom turns the idea of earthly power upside down.

From Jesus’ time to the present day so many, but not all, of those who hold power, through political systems, wealth, or powerful corporations and industries, to name but a few, exhibit the exact opposite of the attributes of the Kingdom of God. Often power comes from a place which places the making of money, success, power above the needs of those less fortunate. Seeing the planet as a place to be exploited for its riches, with little thought to how policies impact the world and other places far away. Although to be fair they are now having to consider some of this as climate change is impacting us all.

So much of this world’s policies are in direct opposition to the kind of leadership and Kingdom that Jesus exemplified. This Kingdom of God which is about servanthood, compassion, love, truth, caring for each other and this beautiful planet we have been given to care for. A Kingdom where people seek to serve God and do His will.

But do not despair, the values of God’s Kingdom do exist in this world. There are people who risk and sometimes forfeit their very lives to speak truth to power. People like Martin Luther King Junior and Gandhi. Others use their power to bring about social change such as the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, and Marcus Rashford, the young footballer who fought to change government policy so children would have more access to free school meals, to name but a few.

We see these principles of the Kingdom of God in the many, many acts of compassion and help that proliferate, most often by those who hold no recognised form of power and authority in this world.

Those projects which run to help others. The food banks, the centres that help the disabled, the homeless, women who suffer domestic violence, those seeking sustainable farming and clean industry to mention just a few.

And then there are the individuals who work in hospitals, care homes, the caring services, giving of themselves above and beyond their job descriptions.

The individuals, who get the shopping in for an elderly neighbor, take time to listen to those in distress, or who do just simple acts of kindness that brighten your day like bringing you a coffee when they see you have not got one.

So many, many kind people and projects in this world. They don't often make the news, except perhaps on occasions like Save the Children week. Many who act in ways of love and kindness may have no faith, others have an active faith. But I would say even to those who profess no faith, you may not have the joy of knowing Jesus like people of faith do, but you are living by the principles of this kingdom, "from another place". This Kingdom of God and closer to Jesus than you may know. This son of God, this Jesus, this Servant King, who came to turn our world's values upside down, to show us another way, and who laid down his life so that we could be saved from our own selfishness and sin.

**Indeed, how we should worship Him, Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of all.
Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Lord of all, we pray for your church. May we always honour you as our King. We pray that your love and your holiness may be seen in all we do, as individuals and as congregations, and as we look ahead to Advent and Christmas, help us as we prepare to celebrate and share the joyful message of Christ's birth.

Your kingdom come
Your will be done.

Lord, we thank you for the shoeboxes that have been brought to church and to many other centres, and for all who have contributed to this year's collection. We pray for the children who will receive them, that the boxes will bring them joy, and each child will know that someone is thinking of them. May these boxes show your love. We ask your strength for the Operation Christmas Child staff and volunteers who will process the boxes, and safe travelling for those who will transport them to countries around the world.

Your kingdom come
Your will be done.

God our Creator, you made this world in all its wonderful beauty and variety. COP 26 has come and gone, leaving us with hopes and fears for what will happen next.

Give wisdom to all who make decisions that affect the future of our planet: governments and national leaders, leaders of nations and communities, those who run businesses, those who research and invent technology. Give them the willingness to do what is right for all, the courage to take right decisions, and the ability to see beyond short-term goals. Help us to do our part too, however small we feel that is.

Your kingdom come
Your will be done.

We pray for those who are unwell or in distress, knowing that you know their situation better than we do, and love them more than we ever can. We pray that you will give help

and strength, peace, comfort and healing. In silence now, we bring you those who are on our hearts today.

We entrust them to your loving care.

Your kingdom come

Your will be done.

In the name of Jesus Christ our King, **Amen.**

HYMN: SERVANT KING

BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you and make his face to shine upon you and give you his peace. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**