

Christ the King / The Reign of Christ
20-11-2022
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

- Jeremiah 23:1-6 The Shepherds have not cared for the flock
but God will send and raise up a King.
- Luke 1:68-79 The Song of Zechariah
A child has come to fulfill God's promise
- Colossians 1:11-20 God created everything through Jesus
God sent Jesus to reconcile all things to himself
- Luke 23: 33-43 Jesus is crucified with the two thieves
The sign read, "The King of the Jews"

Introduction

Today we celebrate the Christian festival, known as "Christ the King" Sunday. This festival is also known as the "Reign of Christ". Christianity has been around for 2000 years, so this festival is relatively new, in that it's not quite 100 years old.

So why this new festival set aside to acknowledge Jesus as King?

In Europe after World War One, Pope Pius 11th, wanted to remind all those who were seeking after worldly power, that ultimately, all power belongs to God, and we can only know God through Jesus. The pope wanted to remind the leaders and the people, that rather than making ourselves King, we need to make Jesus King.

Today, I would like to look at how Jesus came to be our King, and also what it might look like for us, if Jesus is our King, because in worldly terms, Jesus is a very different kind of King.

Christianity's Jewish Roots

Firstly, let's look at the fact that the Jewish people were actually expecting a King to come.

Throughout the Prophets of the Old Testament, we hear the Jewish people being told that a Messiah will come. David had been Israel's greatest King, and they were expecting another King, just like King David, to come and to lead them.

In Jesus time the Romans had conquered the Jews, but they still had Jewish Kings installed as puppets, ruling the people, but only with the approval of, and under the control of, the Romans. We heard in our Sunday bible readings recently how the tax collectors, collected for the Romans, and the Jews certainly resented that. I'm sure that the Jewish people of Jesus time longed for the day when a good King, like David, would come to rule them again.

The Old Testament reading today, is from the prophet Jeremiah, who prophesied about 600 years before Jesus was born. Jeremiah described the leaders who led the Jewish people poorly, as bad shepherds, and he went on to prophesy how God would send good shepherds. Then we hear Jeremiah prophesy,

“⁵ The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”

The Jews in Jesus time were expecting a King to come, but they were expecting a more worldly King. They weren't expecting a king like Jesus.

Worldly King

And what do we think of when we hear the word, King?

The definition of a King is someone who rules a kingdom. Someone who has power and authority. Kings are generally more ceremonial in the 21st century, but in Jesus' day kings ruled with ultimate control. What they said happened. They had complete control over the lives of their subjects. Those in positions of power today may not wield as much power as kings did in Jesus' day, but the model of kingship which Jesus displayed in his earthly life, is still very different to what we generally see in those who hold positions of power, even today.

Jesus as King

So how was Jesus so different to earthly kings?

For a start Jesus did not have an earthly kingdom. Jesus did not control any territory. He did not have an army, or weapons, or any means by which to physically compel his subjects. Jesus did not seek or gain political power in his earthly life, however, it is very clear that Jesus' actions had political ramifications.

Yes, Jesus was a descendant of David, but that's about where the similarity to what we would call an earthly kingship ends. When Jesus came to earth, he was born in a stable. He worked as a carpenter.

He began his public life by calling disciples, and teaching about the Kingdom of God. Jesus mixed with the poor, he healed the sick, he cast out demons, and he fed the hungry. Jesus showed care and concern for those in need. Jesus was a friend to those who were outcasts.

Jesus was what we would call counter cultural today. Whilst he knew that his kingship would upset power structures and challenge authority, Jesus' goal was to bring peace. Jesus stood against strife and division and conflict. That's why one of the titles for Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

Ultimately Jesus kingship involved his death on the cross, so that all humanity could be reconciled to God. The Jews were expecting an earthly King, but Jesus is so much more. In Jesus we have the way to God.

Even from the cross Jesus says,

'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.'

On the day of the crucifixion when one of the criminals says,

'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'

Jesus replies, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'

Jesus' Kingship is very different to the kings of this world, but it is still very much, for this world. And we hear from the very words of Jesus that his Kingship, extends beyond this world.

After the resurrection of Jesus, he told his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. And since then, Christianity has spread around the globe. Jesus' kingship extends beyond countries and peoples. Jesus' kingship is for all.

Jesus' Subjects

So, what does it mean for us, if Jesus is our King?

The first thing that it does, is allow us to know that we are reconciled to God, and we can live in God's peace. Just as the criminal who acknowledged who Jesus was, was assured of being in Paradise with Jesus, we too can have that assurance.

And once we have this assurance, we are called to follow Jesus as our King. We are called to do the things that Jesus did. We are called to seek peace and not conflict, we are called to care for others. We are called to bring about the very kingdom that Jesus inaugurated.

This week I have been challenged as to what it is to have Jesus as my king. I sat on the benches in front of the hall and listened to two people who have had challenges and difficulties in their lives that I can't even begin to imagine. They just turned up. I think it is a blessing that some people still see church as a place where they can get help. Both seemed to really need help and direction, but I was only able to listen. These are the kind of people who Jesus sort to help when he was physically on this earth. If Jesus is our king, then these are the kind of people we should be seeking to help in our lives, now.

In a world where, society seems to be becoming more, and more selfish, Jesus calls us to love beyond ourselves.

Conclusion

So today, as we acknowledge Jesus as our King, we are called to love like Jesus loved, and we are called to bring peace as Jesus brought peace.

As our collect prayer says, May the Holy Spirit empower us to love the unloved, and to minister to all in need. Amen.