



# CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY



20<sup>th</sup> November 2022

*The eternal reign of Christ the King*

Greetings my brothers & sisters in Christ, what a joy it is to be here, as we come together to worship and celebrate Christ the King & the reign of Christ on this 23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of our Pentecost journey.

I pray, that today's message will lift all our spirits, as we journey together, and encourage us, as we live out our lives as Christians, servants of Christ our King, committed to lives of service, in His Kingdom!

Let us pray.

*Jesus, come join us in our journey, as we seek Your will, for this community, in this environment. Teach us to love each other as you love us, to give ourselves as you give yourself. That the kingdom of GOD might be present to all.*

*Amen.*

Well, I've spent a lot of last week, reflecting on the Kairos Inside #13 short course that we served on @ St Heliers CC, and how with Christ as our King / Head / Leader, so much was accomplished through the Holy Spirits power, in demonstrating, first hand, to our guests who the true Leader is that we follow. By the actions of the church in all their Agape of prayer, letters, finance, biscuits and slices & the teams' application of Listen, Listen, Love, Love. To me this links in beautifully with today's readings.

Our Gospel passage from Luke, might, on a shallow reading, simply be making the fairly standard point that Christ's kingship and authority are a challenge to the worldly understandings of power. That's a good and important point, and one that needs making repeatedly, since we humans on the whole, don't understand it, let alone want to hear it! But the trouble is we now live in a society that puts self-first, and is in a terrible muddle about 'leadership'.

We know you can't just hold up the standard, worldly model of power and then contrast it with the Biblical one, because there isn't a standard, worldly model of power!

I got this piece off the internet.

"Let's imagine: It's time to elect a world leader, and your vote counts.

Which would you choose?

"Candidate A: Associates with ward healers and consults with astrologists; has had two mistresses; chain-smokes and drinks eight to ten martinis a day.

"Candidate B: Was kicked out of office twice; sleeps until noon; used opium in college; drinks a quart of brandy every evening.

"Candidate C: Is a decorated war hero, a vegetarian, doesn't smoke, drinks an occasional beer, and has had no illicit love affairs.

"Which of these candidates is your choice?

You don't really need any more information, do you?

Candidate A is Franklin Roosevelt.

Candidate B is Winston Churchill.  
Candidate C is Adolf Hitler.”

There are all kinds of things that suggest that we would don't really know what we want from our heroes or leaders, and we don't know what we are looking for!

On the one hand, people beg for strong leadership, but the minute a leader does something they don't like, they turn around and accuse them of failing to listen to the people and shout that they must remember that we are a democracy.

Or we set up heroes – sports people – actors – models – TV personalities, successful entrepreneurs etc, whose wealth and opportunity we envy, but we seem only to be able to tolerate their success for a short time and then we start to long for them to fail.

Their privilege, instead of being an inspiration to us, becomes a challenge, and makes our situation seem worse by comparison, so that we cannot wait to discover that our heroes are secretly deeply miserable people.

In other words, we are fickle and hard to lead and inspire because we have no understanding of our own deepest needs and desire. All we do know is that, whatever they are, they are not being fulfilled.

So, what do today's passages teach us about this situation?

From our Old Testament reading, Jeremiah pictures a people who whose leadership has left them fragmented and pulling in different directions – very reminiscent of our own culture.

The people are scattered and lost their sense of who they are. They no longer remember that they are God's people and that they belong together in community. For this Jeremiah roundly blames the leaders, who should have shepherded their people, but instead have allowed them to get scattered and lost.

Their punishment is to suffer the fate that they allowed to come upon God's people. They themselves will be scattered and lost, they will be leaders and men of power no longer!

In their place God will raise up faithful shepherds, who will restore the sense of belonging and security. And then at last, the people will be ready for the coming of the Messiah, because they will be in a position to recognise his reign, as Jeremiah says in 23.5, of "justice and righteousness", for what it is – an echo of God's own nature.

We note that in their initial state of distress and alienation, they wouldn't have known "justice and righteousness" if it had been handed to them on a plate.

Our New Testament reading tells us, the Colossians have come to that happy state where they can recognise the rule of God. Indeed, they have taken the next step, the one implied at the end of the reading from Jeremiah, and made the connection between their shepherd and God. They have come to see Jesus has taken them out of confusion, darkness and submission of false leaders into God's Kingdom of freed and forgiven people. They have also come to see that He can do this because He is full of the reflection of God's own loving and reconciling Kingship. Jeremiah looks for a time when his people will be rescued, and the Colossians know that they have been already!

Our Gospel reading from Luke, tells us that the rescuer is a man "hanging on the cross".

Luke gives us the extremely paradoxical picture of Jesus, hanging helplessly in pain and near death, yet still the King, opening the gates of His kingdom, to the bewildered, misled, barely human rabble around him. As he asks for forgiveness of the crowd, and as he leads the thief into the kingdom, He is, in all His agony, still the one whom as Colossians 1:16 tells us, all "thrones .... Dominions, rulers, powers", must acknowledge as Lord!

The thief has instinctively what, Jeremiah's people have to relearn, a sense of God's justice. He recognises his own guilt and Jesus's innocence, and so demonstrates that he can still recognise God. His ability to see the character of God's face and God's rule of righteousness and justice fits him for the kingdom.

To learn to do the same, to be able to recognise the character of God's reign and to long for it, we need to borrow the Colossian's key, which is Christ Jesus, and to look for His likeness, day by day, until we can recognise and love it.

**Amen**