

ST. JOHN BAPTIST, BROUGHTON

21st November 2021

Reflection by Rev. Pauline Taylor

Christ the King

The theme for this Sunday's readings are a reminder to us that the ascended Christ became king of all the earth, and that all thrones, dominions, rulers and powers are subject to him. As it says in Colossians chapter 1;

for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created...

all things have been created through him and for him.

That makes a huge difference for our world! The only constancy is the rule of Christ, which is as it says in verse 14 of the reading from Daniel;

His dominion is an everlasting dominion

Earthly rulers come and go: presidents and prime ministers, monarchs and ministers are ousted and toppled. Empires; flourish and then fade. Change never stops. Political relationships are always in flux. Membership of the EU which helped to define the UK since 1973 is no longer a reality and this has changed our place in the world and our understanding of who we are as a nation.

The kingship of Christ doesn't mean that Christ controls the details of our politics. In the Gospel reading, Jesus makes a clear separation between his kingdom and the politics of the Roman Empire. This does not mean that worldly politics does not matter; Jesus is saying that his kingship doesn't work like human systems. The way we vote, the people we put in charge of us – these things do matter; they make a difference to the political culture, and that has an impact on each one of us. Christ does care about the impact of our politics on others.

Christ does not do kingship in the way of the world. In Christ's kingdom we find a concern for truth. In the next verse after Sunday's Gospel reading, Pilate asks 'What is truth?', which is very much a current question in contemporary culture, where truth often appears to have been so distorted.

The ultimate truth is about who Christ is, and the readings point to this: Christ loves us, Christ frees

us from sin, Christ is constant, there from beginning to end, all power rests in him, Christ is judge, Christ is king in glory. More generally, the Gospels show how the life of Christ demonstrates leadership in service of others, the servant king. When we recognise Christ as king, we hold our own power and all human power more lightly. The buck does not ultimately stop with our human leaders. The way we exercise power matters.

We all exercise power to some degree, even if we are not rulers. In our own worlds we have influence, whether in places of work or churches or community groups or families. The way we live, the way we treat others matters. In our relationships with others, where Christ is king, we treat people with respect and kindness.

The waters in today's psalm 93 are chaotic, loud, destructive – but God is mightier. For the past fortnight world leaders have been discussing the effects of climate change and what can be done to reverse its effects. It seems as though nothing can stand against the freak weather events that have occurred in the past year. If God is for us, whom can be against us? This is our king, whom we can trust, a king who will prepare himself, go out and defend us with his own life – and the Gospel will show him to us. God's holiness is more threatening than the stormy sea. How can we stand before a holy God? Jesus' stilling of the storm is a sign of his triumph over the ultimate chaos of sin and death on the cross. Because of God's power, both in creation and salvation, the world is safe for you and me. When we stand on the seashore, do we let it move us to praise our Creator and Redeemer?

I think that the words in Graham Kendrick's hymn "The Servant King" is a true reflection of God's message.

Verse 1

*From heav'n You came, helpless Babe
Entered our world, Your glory veiled;*

*Not to be served but to serve
And give Your life that we might live*

Chorus

*This is our God, the Servant King
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to the Servant King*

Verse 2

*There in the garden of tears
My heavy load He chose to bear;
His heart with sorrow was torn
'Yet not my will but Yours,' He said*

Verse 3

*Come see His hands and His feet
The scars that speak of sacrifice;
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered*

Verse 4

*So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him;
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving*

Let us pray:

Living God, though we can do nothing, teach us
that you can do everything. Through Jesus Christ
our Lord.

Amen.