

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson

**Sunday 21st November 2021 - Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe**

Readings (Year B): 1st: Daniel 7:13-14. Psalm: 92. 2nd: Apocalypse 1:5-8. Gospel: John 18:33-37.

There is no doubt we live in a topsy-turvy world. We acknowledge what times we have been living though during the last couple of years. The pandemic has added to it. But truths and values are often inverted. Pope Francis is worried that the world is on the brink of a serious crisis. “The Virus is only one part of it. We are living at a time of growing international tension, and democracy is weakening across the globe.” Speaking last year he said “There is no alternative: we either build the future together or there will be no future.”

With all that facing us, the readings for today’s celebration of Christ the King speak to us of the Lord’s sovereign rule over all time and space. But they also speak about the places of muddle and difficulty. There is a definite sense of topsy-turvyness about it.

The kingship of Jesus was and is very different from that of earthly kings and queens. Pontius Pilate was so uncertain about Jesus’ kingship that he had to question him about it. Certainly Jesus had none of the trappings Pilate would have associated with monarchy. No fine clothing, or jewels, no status or army to defend him. But Jesus had been accused of claiming to be a king and this was a direct challenge to the authority of Caesar. So Pilate asked. “Are you really a king?”

Jesus response reveals him as a different king. His kingdom is not of this world, but is an everlasting kingdom, begun here on earth by his coming and stretching into eternity. And the kingdom values Jesus preached have the potential to turn our world upside down. Instead of selfish wealth, power and prestige, Jesus proclaimed a kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice love and peace. Having announced the presence of his kingdom amongst us, Jesus promised to return one day and reign over it in glory.

The prophet Daniel in our 1<sup>st</sup> reading can gaze “into the visions of the night” and see not only the darkness but an eternal reign of peace and justice; and the writer of the Apocalypse can look into the furthest reaches of human experience –the Last things –and see the joyful drawing of all things together in Christ, “the Alpha and the Omega.” The vision that Jesus would come on the clouds for everyone to see. This gift of a vision of hope beyond present fears and struggles is a gift of Christ’s kingship to his people.

This we proclaim week by week in the memorial acclamations and the Creed Jesus ‘will come again in glory and his kingdom will have no end.’ We are called in today’s celebration to come to know Christ not only as friend or teacher, but specifically as king. It is not insignificant that the gospel passage we hear today comes from the account leading up to Jesus’ passion and death. We sing Jesus is ‘King of love on Calvary.’ On the throne of the cross, gold is replaced by wood, jewels by thorn, fine wine by vinegar and rich garments by nakedness. Christ is jeered and mocked, tortured and humiliated – a topsy-turvy king if ever there was one. Yet this is what Jesus understands by being a king; this is what he came into the world to accomplish. This is where he reigns, washing our sins away with his blood. This is how he shows the depths of God’s love for us.

To see strength and meaning in the cross is to grasp the secret of Christ’s kingdom. Those things which signify vulnerability, suffering and death, are paradoxically also the means of glory, healing and life. In fact, the only way somethings will ever be resolved is by bringing them to the foot of the cross. In the words of Cardinal Hume, this is because “*behind the crucifix you see, with the eyes of faith, the outline of the risen Christ.*”

The message of this kingdom may sometimes seem difficult to grasp, it may appear upside down, inside out or back to front. It might, in other words seem beyond us. But to believe and live the kingdom is the act of faith e make each time we pray ‘Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Why we celebrate Christ as our king.

Canon Philip Dyson