

Sunday, 21 November 2021
Christ the King

Collect

Eternal Father,
whose Son Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven
that he might rule over all things as Lord and King:
keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit
and in the bond of peace,
and bring the whole created order to worship at his feet;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Psalm 93

- 1 The Lord is king and has put on glorious apparel; ♦
the Lord has put on his glory and girded himself with strength.
- 2 He has made the whole world so sure ♦
that it cannot be moved.
- 3 Your throne has been established from of old; ♦
you are from everlasting.
- 4 The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; ♦
the floods lift up their pounding waves.
- 5 Mightier than the thunder of many waters,
mightier than the breakers of the sea, ♦
the Lord on high is mightier.
- 6 Your testimonies are very sure; ♦
holiness adorns your house, O Lord, for ever.

Revelation 1.4b–8

4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

⁷ Look! He is coming with the clouds;

every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him;
and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.

So it is to be. Amen.

8 '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

33 Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' ³⁴Jesus answered, 'Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?' ³⁵Pilate replied, 'I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?' ³⁶Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.' ³⁷Pilate asked him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.'

Reflection from Peter

Kings, queens, dynasties of ruling families – these were once taken for granted, part of the way the world is, but no longer. Today we see clearly how often rulers and monarchs exploited those whom they governed for their own good. It is then all the more remarkable that our admiration, love and respect for the

Queen just goes on growing. She has been so many things for our nation: a point of stability, a model of dedication and service, a quiet, wise voice of reassurance and hope. Yet, as she herself said in her address to the Church of England's General Synod the other day (read for her by Prince Edward) "none of us can slow the passage of time!" Astonishing though her long reign has been, it cannot last for ever. But, in a vastly changed world, when we come to celebrate this feast of Christ the King we find ourselves recognising that her example helps us to be able to think of the kingship of Christ in a positive light. This is an important start. The Queen, fallible and human, like the rest of us, shows us what a human being can achieve through utterly selfless dedication and discipline. But the kingship of Christ is not a human construct. As he says to Pilate, "My kingdom is not from this world." In the person of Jesus, kingship is itself transformed. It is no longer a symbol of political power. Instead it is the declaration of God's utter faithfulness and commitment to the whole of creation. It is power – but not power to exploit and oppress, but the power to transform everyone and everything so that all may live in freedom, light and love. The prophet Isaiah struggled to convey what this could mean when he talked about the wolf living with the lamb and the leopard lying down with the kid – things unimaginable in this world. As the winter darkness closes in and a new church year is about to begin with the season of Advent, this feast comes as a great explosion of light and energy reminding us of the promises of God. We are hoping, not just for the cleaning up of sleaze and doubtful practices by politicians and others in public life, but a new creation; not just a better version of life now, but the fullness of life. St Augustine put it wonderfully at the end of his great work, "The city of God" - "There we shall rest and we shall see; we shall see and we shall love; we shall love and we shall praise. Behold what shall be in the end and shall not end."