

Christ the King Sunday.

I wonder how many of you know anything about it!

I certainly didn't.

So, here's the history: -

Christ the King Sunday is a relatively recent addition to the liturgical calendar.

Pope Pius the 11th added it to the liturgical calendar in 1925 as a response to the spread of secularism in the modern world.

Originally, Christ the King Sunday was the last Sunday of October, but it was moved by Pope Paul the 6th in 1969, to be the last Sunday of ordinary time. The last of the Church year before we enter the season of Advent and a new Church year.

That is all the churchy liturgical stuff out the way.

But what does it mean to us and for us today?

This day was set aside as the Feast of Christ the King to remind the world that Jesus Christ Reigns.

To celebrate that He is Divine King of the universe who unites all of creation with the Father.

Today, we can focus on who Jesus really is; to look at the whole picture and approach the season of Advent in a new, fresh way.

How could God's power and love be revealed through the humble birth of a baby and a man's shameful execution? How could this man Jesus be King of the world through weakness and self-sacrifice?

Let us remind ourselves that the Messiah was prophesied throughout scripture.

There are between 200 and 400 fulfilled in the Old Testament.

Jeremiah 23 v 5

"The days are coming", declares the Lord, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land."

And in Zechariah the familiar (9v9,)

"..See your king comes to you righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, a foal of a donkey."

At the beginning of Matthew's gospel we know that Jesus is royal, the messiah.

In foreign lands this King's birth was recognised by the Magi.

These men of high position and power, often called wise men, travelled thousands of miles seeking the king of the Jews. They would have had a large caravan of camels and slaves accompanying them and they would have been an imposing sight.

Can you imagine King Herod watching this impressive vision as they rolled up at his palace.

Not only were they important but they were looking for a king.

They brought gifts fit for a King. Symbols of Christ's identity.

Gold, a gift for a king. Incense, a gift for a deity, and myrrh a spice for a person who was going to die.

They bowed down and worshipped Him.

Wise men indeed.

The record of Christ's ministry in the Gospels confirms his power and authority over all creation. He heals the sick; the blind can see; the deaf can hear; the lame walk and the dead are raised. He preached about His kingdom. The kingdom of God where he will reign. The eternal Kingdom.

In our Gospel reading during his trial with Pilate, Jesus refers to this other kingdom.

'A kingdom from another place'.

Not one belonging to this world.

Jesus is not King in the political sense but in the supernatural sense.

He is more powerful than an earthly ruler because His Kingdom is one of everlasting love.

Jesus is the divine King of the universe who unites all of creation with the Father.

He is King over all creation because he is God, the creator and thus the very essence of truth.

He is a perfect ruler who invites everyone to listen to His voice, find the truth and love and serve Him in their lives.

Jesus died so we could have forgiveness of sins and be part of His kingdom.

He rose to conquer sin and death, proving his kingship and showing us that he wants to bring us all to resurrection.

For me, the picture that brings hope and excitement and a lot of awe is our Revelation reading.

I know some of this passage can be quite scary and mystifying but what I really, really want you to focus on are the words and phrases that try to describe Jesus to us.

Here, he is not the sacrificial Lamb but a returning, conquering, warrior King.

He is called, 'Faithful and True', 'Word of God', and 'King of Kings and Lord of Lords'.,

Why so many names?

Because, no name can do him justice. He is greater than any description or expression the human mind can devise.

He is too awesome, magnificent, and glorious for us to understand.

'He has a name written on him that no-one knows but himself'.

Christ the King is so much more than we can ever comprehend. But the title of King gives us some idea.

Sometimes we get so lost in all the words and ideas, and the hugeness of our triune God that we lose the fundamental truth that Jesus wants to be king of our lives.

He is not a tyrannical ruler but a loving king who desires the best for His people.

He invites us to serve him. By loving and obeying him.

Let us be reassured that Christ is in charge. And be encouraged that His presence makes all the difference when we feel most alone and isolated.

That our vision will be that of love's victory over death and of Christ the King who will draw us into his eternal kingdom.

His Kingship will make all the difference when things seem out of control and chaotic. I pray that today we will be in awe of a God who, in astonishing, extravagant love showed his power by sending His son to be born in a humble and poor situation; to be human but also divine; and suffer torture and death so we could approach the throne of His Mercy and grace without guilt but as free and loved children.

May we, with our limited understanding, grasp that all power and might belongs to Him. That Jesus is the King and Lord of our lives. That we belong utterly to him and we can say with St Paul, 'It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me'.

Let's pray,

Jesus, thank you for becoming our true King.

Today, please grant us the desire and ability to live according to your way of love, caring for each of my neighbours without partiality, as you do.

When we become angry or despairing toward the injustice and violence in our world, help us to embrace the living hope we see in you, King Jesus, and help us to remain faithful to your loving way of life.

Amen

Gilly Robinson