

Feast of Christ the King, 25/11/2018 Holy Trinity

When some of us were growing up, this last Sunday of the Liturgical Year was known as “stir up Sunday”: the Sunday before Advent.

This came from the collect in the Church of England Book of Common Prayer that was used in the Eucharist on this day and was also a reminder that it was time to stir the ingredients for the Christmas puddings: time to get cracking in the kitchen.

Now in many Western Churches this day is known as Christ the King Sunday.

This gives us an opportunity to reflect on this most unusual king and his kingdom.

For some people even the concept of kings and queens is difficult and to-day we have a Gospel reading that takes us back to Holy Week including Good Friday with Jesus being charged with kingship by the Jewish people in front of Pilate, the Governor of the area, instead of looking forward to Christmas and its festivities.

This encounter begins with Pilate asking Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?” and finishes some hours later with Jesus, wearing the trappings of a king, a purple robe and a crown of thorns, being presented to the Jews with the words, “Here is your King”.

The crowd responded, “Crucify him” and then “We have no king but Caesar”.

As we reflect on this incident in the Gospel narrative I wonder what Christ’s kingship has for us in the twenty-first century.

What is our response as we are presented with “Here is your king”: this man in a purple robe and wearing a crown of thorns who is about to be crushed by Roman imperial power?

Perhaps some of you gain consolation in Jesus’ reply according to this morning’s translation to Pilate “my kingdom is not of this world”.

This seems to imply that we may express belief that Jesus is king and that the kingdom is other-worldly, a spiritual and heavenly reality that has nothing to do with this world in the here and now.

Another translation which I gained from the writings of Tom Wright, a Biblical scholar and bishop in the Church of England, is “My kingdom isn’t the sort that grows in this world..... My kingdom isn’t the sort that comes from here”.

It doesn’t take us long living in this world to realise that the world is the source of evil and rebellion against God and that we are part of that rebellion on many occasions.

There is no wonder that Jesus taught his disciples to pray “Your kingdom come on earth as in heaven”.

We do not need to pray for the Kingdom of God to come in heaven.

We certainly need to pray for the Kingdom of God to come on this earth.

The question is "Do we really mean it?"

It seems to me that humans are cynical about Christ the King and the Kingdom of God and we show this by our actions.

Day by day we face the temptation to proclaim that Jesus Christ is the King and yet we are caught up in the things of the world that says, "We have no king but Caesar."

That Caesar is the manipulation of our ethical standards, of our need to have this and that in consumerism, of our feelings of love and empathy because we see so much terror, killing and of sex having nothing to do with love and of our values for financial or political gain.

It is hard not to be caught up in this manipulation.

Then we see this man who is presented in a purple robe and a crown of thorns being used by Pilate, the religious authorities and the crowd for their own worldly purposes.

This is Jesus, who went from there to the cross, died and was raised, Jesus Christ our King who demands our allegiance, our truth and our all.

This is our King who we keep in our sights day by day, minute by minute in order that we may give him **our all**.

Give Jesus what? **Our all**.