

Subjects

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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.

Our text this morning is three phrases from Psalm 95 and verse 3:

‘ . . . the Lord . . . a great God . . . a great king . . . ’

The Christian Year ends with a celebration of Christ the King. It seems appropriate that the end of our liturgical year should be a reminder of the sovereignty of God, that ultimately God is in charge. Given that we are living in the 21st Century, kingship is no longer the model for the way a country, a land, is governed. Here in France, we've a President and we're citizens of the Fifth Republic. But back in the UK, we still have a monarch, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and though she is a democratic monarch, we are, nevertheless, her subjects. This morning, therefore, I'd like briefly to consider what it might mean to be a subject of Christ the King, to belong to the Kingdom of God.

Four ideas – five verbs: to respect; to obey; to serve; to be loved and to love.

Firstly, to respect. The Ten Commandments could be summarised in this one word. Respect: to honour, to value, to hold in high esteem. The first four commandments are about our respect for God; the second six about our respect for Man. If we are to be loyal subjects of our king, then first and foremost we must and should respect the God we worship. If not how can we even begin ?

Secondly, to obey. To a good Jew, obedience to the Law of the Lord was what it meant to be righteous. A Jew was right in the sight of the Law because he kept God's laws, obeyed his commandments. The whole of a Jew's life was informed and shaped by obedience to a right way of behaving, of living, of doing. And for us, as Christians, we try to practise what we preach – the good life, the moral life, based on and rooted in the teachings of Jesus.

Thirdly, to serve. At the heart of today's parable of the sheep and the goats is a model of service. Those placed on the right hand of the Son of Man have served him by feeding the hungry; giving a drink to those who thirst; welcoming in the stranger; clothing the naked; caring for the sick; visiting those in prison. Those placed on his left failed to do these things. The list itself is not exhaustive but simply points to being there for those in need and that is what it can mean to serve our King.

Lastly, to be loved and to love. What is truly extraordinary about Christ our King is that he loves us, that we are beloved of him. No matter who we are or where we are or what we've done, he loves us. That great parable, 'The Prodigal Son' illustrates the character and nature of God in the person of the boy's father who

rushes out to greet his younger son coming home the worst for wear – hungry, dirty, barefoot, in rags, exhausted. If we are loved, we should respond by loving others. We are mirrors of God's love, reflecting his love for us by how we treat other people. To be subjects of Christ the King is to be loved and to love.

So this morning, when we celebrate the fact that Christ is King, let us remember what it might mean to be his subjects: to respect, obey, serve, to be loved and to love.

I have spoken in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

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