

Christ the King

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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 may be found in Matthew's gospel chapter 25 and verse 31:

**'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him,
then he will sit on the throne of his glory.'**

Way back in October 1982, at the evening service at St Paul's, East Ham, as a Reader-in-training in the Diocese of Chelmsford, I preached my first sermon. Today, some 35 years on, I'm going to preach my 1500th ! That I know the number and dates of my sermons, and that they are all typed and printed and stored in lever arch files, tells you what a sad character I am – an ex-librarian and teacher before I became a priest.

In September 1988, I transferred my licence as Reader to the Church of King Charles the Martyr, Potters Bar, just up the road from Dame Alice Owen's School where I was the Director of Studies. There aren't many churches in the Church of England dedicated to King Charles 1, king and martyr. A modern build,

interestingly in the form of a Jacobean barn, KCM boasts a figure of Christ the King. He hangs on the bare wall above the choir vestry to the right of the altar. Standing free, fully clothed in royal robes, with a crown on his head, his back against a cross, Jesus has his arms open in welcome, his palms outstretched with the marks of the nails clearly visible. It is a vision that combines royalty with love, majesty with compassion, kingship with welcome.

It is interesting to think of Jesus as Christ the King. Given he was born in a stable, also being royal is an interesting attribute. Of course, the son of Mary is also the Son of God and, as such, Jesus is not only the Messiah, our Saviour, but he is also our Lord and King. There is an interesting paradox in the fact that the man who loves us so much, so much that he was prepared to die for us, is not only our Lord and King but he is also our teacher, friend and brother.

But today, in 'The parable of the sheep and the goats', is a picture of Christ's Second Coming with a host of angels, of him sitting enthroned in judgement. It is an impressive picture of power and majesty, of justice and right judgement. But in spite of the awful condemnation of the unrighteous, spiritual goats who ignore things spiritual, who are untouched by and unresponsive to the love of God, we have the simple truth that if we are open to God the Father through Jesus his Son, touched by his Holy Spirit, informed by his grace and moved by his love, then we will mirror that love to others: by feeding the hungry, by giving the thirsty something to drink, by welcoming the stranger, by clothing the naked, by visiting the sick and those in prison. All we do should be an expression of compassion, of our being informed by agape, the love of God for Man.

So today, on the feast of Christ the King, it is a timely reminder of the true nature of Christ – that he is our King. Yes, Jesus is powerful, omnipotent; yes Jesus is wise, omniscient; but though Jesus judges us, he loves us too and, however inadequate we may be, that we try to do our best because we positively accept Jesus' love for us and try to mirror that love to others is enough to be justified in the sight of Christ our King – God willing.

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

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

26th November, 2017

G: Sermons 36 : Christ the King

