

Christ the King

24 11 13

Let us pray.

May the words of my lips and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our rock and our Redeemer,

Amen.

Our text today may be found in Luke's gospel, chapter 23 and verse 28:

'This is the King of the Jews.'

Next week is Advent Sunday. It marks the beginning of the new Christian Year. And for us, here at All Saints' Vendée, it will mark the first Sunday when the Revd Caroline Sackley will start her ministry with us as our priest-in-charge. A new beginning for her and a fresh start for us and like you I do like you wish her well and every blessing as she ministers to us. But first, today, we mark the end of this year's Christian calendar with the feast of Christ the King.

Now I don't know what you think of the idea of monarchy or kingship – and chances are that here in France, some of you will be must staunch Republicans. But the idea of Christ as our king is rooted very much in the life and times of the Jews in Palestine into which Jesus was born. When the Children of Israel returned from Exile in Egypt into the Promised Land, Kingship was the model for the peoples of the lands which surrounded them. And though the Jews were ruled by God under successive leaders appointed by him, according to scripture, they

longed to be like the nations around them and to have a king of their own. Despite Samuel's grave reservations, Saul was appointed king, then David and then Solomon and it was a golden age for the Kingdom of Israel. When first the Northern then the Southern Kingdom were conquered, the Jews lost their freedom, their independence and their king but it produced a longing for a return to good old days and a king to rule of them, a son of David, a Messiah, who would restore to them that which was lost. Despite his title, Herod wasn't that great nor was a Roman Governor like Pontius Pilate !

Whatever you personally may think of earthly kings – and I do think that in the person of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, we have an excellent example of what it can mean to be a constitutional monarch – I believe that it is important to remember that Christians consider that Christ is King. I think that it is important because it helps to give us a balanced picture of Jesus. The great thing about Jesus is that we can think of him as our friend and our brother. We can think of him as warm and compassionate and loving: the good shepherd who goes out in search of the lost sheep; the man of God who was moved by the hunger of the crowd to feed them with the bread of life; the teacher who taught us that not only is God our Father but that we can call him daddy – 'Abba'. But at the same time we should never forget that though Christ set aside his garments to wash the feet of his disciples, he is nevertheless the Son of God. Peter knew as much and was rightly horrified that someone so pure, so holy, could undertake so menial and demeaning a task as to wash the dirt and dust off the soles of his feet. And hence in that simple act at the Last Supper, we see expressed the paradox at the heart of

our faith: the image of a loving king, divinity and humanity, combining majesty with compassion.

In Potters Bar in Hertfordshire, just to the north of London near to the intersection of the A1M with the M25, is a church with an unusual dedication – ‘King Charles the 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. And that, my friends, is the paradox I should like to leave with you today. Jesus is both our king and our friend, both our teacher and our Saviour, our Lord who loves us more than we can know and who wants us to come home to him.

So if that’s true what will you do ?

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

Preached at

All Saints’, Vendée

24th November, 2013

G: Sermons 28 : Christ the king

