

## Christ the King – 21 November 2010 - Colossians 1:15-20

### Introduction

This week marks the end of the current Christian year. Next Sunday ushers in Advent, the new year of the church calendar. We finish the old year with a bang! We revel in the unusual life of Christ. Jesus is a ‘one off’. A bizarre kind of royalty. Today we celebrate “The Festival of Christ the King”. There is no other king in history like this one whom we love and praise with heart and mind and voice. The kingliness of Jesus is singularly unusual. So unlike any other, that I wonder whether we should discard the word ‘king’ and find an alternative name. You think of names like Emperor, President, Prime Minister, Governor, Premier – however none of these seem quite right. We might as well stay with king, which at least has plenty of echoes in Scripture and is historically linked to the word Messiah.

Another advantage of staying with the word King, is the value of stark contrast. Jesus turns the idea of a king inside out and upside down, which is wonderful, so let’s explore that a little further.

### Typical Kings of this Earth

During the week we had the announcement of the engagement of Prince William to Kate Middleton. I was somewhat surprised with the huge spread about this in the Canberra Times. Yes, a momentous occasion for them, maybe for the monarchists. Even our Prime Minister commended them on the occasion although it doesn’t seem to have changed her living arrangements!

An amazing amount of fuss over an impending wedding. Yes, William is second in line for the throne but incredible the press frenzy for the occasion.

However let’s go back to the past. Historically a king had absolute power over their subjects. Arbitrary authority over life and death.

Historically kingship included body guards and armies to keep you safe and in power. There was a ruthless enforcement of royal decrees.

There was violent suppression of opposition. Spies and enforcers, midnight raids, torture chambers and dungeons were the order of the day (some might say this hasn’t changed in various parts of the world!). ‘King’ implied luxury and palaces. It meant gold threaded robes, shining crowns studded with precious stones along with an over-supply of sumptuous meals.

‘King’ meant sheer dominance, absolute power, extravagance, lofty arrogance, along with grandiose displays of ‘pomp and ceremony’ to impress others and keep the locals subservient.

Is this the way of Christ?!

### Power and Self Glory is not a Christ thing.

Christ our King has nothing in common with the historical kings of the earth. Hence the use of ‘Christ the King’ seems incongruous to our use of the word ‘king’.

For Christ has – no power

- commands no armies
- is not into 'pomp or ceremony'
- mixes often with the 'wrong sorts' of people
- goes to the homes of sinners and tax-collectors
- exercises no political power
- isn't interested in bullying people
- has no palaces or wealth
- isn't interested in bribes or favours
- doesn't force obedience

Yet his kingship transforms people through relationships, through healing, through teaching, through sharing, through encouragement, through prayer, through his very presence. A totally different style of kingship to that of the world

#### The sincerity of New Testament Praise

In the glorious reading we enjoyed today from the Letter to the Colossians, we had an extended passage which glorified Christ. This section of praise is one of the best in Scripture giving praise to Christ the King. Let us hear some of these words again:

***“Christ is the very image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.***

***For in him all things were created in heaven and on earth, things visible & invisible,***

***whether thrones or empires, principalities or other authorities.***

***He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.***

***He is the head of the body of the church, the beginning and the first-born from the***

***dead, and in everything he has no equal. For in Christ all the fullness of God was***

***happy to come and live, and through him all things are being reconciled, whether***

***on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”***

What amazing praise! It comes from love not obedience, from joy rather than fear. The outpouring of faith in these early Christian communities is quite wonderful. You see it not only here in Colossians, but also in Ephesians and Philippians where people have suffered hardship for their faith, for Christ their King, yet they do not look back with regret but rather come with these songs of praises.

More recently I witnessed this in East Timor, where the people had suffered for both their faith as well as resisting Indonesia. In the aftermath of the destruction of cities and villages the people seemed to have grown in their faith. Those churches left

standing were packed with people listening outside and with four or five services a Sunday - quite incredible as people wanted to be part of worshipping their King.

At the heart of the Gospel is the Crucified Christ.

Bruce Prewer, on his web-site for this Sunday has the following words about this passage and Christ the King.

***“Here in Colossians is a crucified man wearing a crown of thorns. King Jesus. The wounded healer. The bloodied reconciler. The one who lays down his life for others. This is Jesus our king, the one who turns all other ideas of kingship inside out. Here is the humble son of Mary. The apprentice of his earthly father, Joseph the carpenter. A village man who became an itinerant preacher and healer. The fellow who listened to women with unusual respect in what was a man’s world. A blesser of street kids. A dinner guest among the equivalent of bikies and beach bums. The saviour trusted by prostitutes and tax collectors. Friend of foreigners and fishermen. A servant washing the feet of guests. A soul in agony, praying in an olive grove. The young rabbi betrayed by a disciple. Prisoner in a kangaroo court, abused by police guards. Condemned man, mocked, flogged and spat upon. A victim carrying his own cross to the Place of the Skull. The crucified man, speaking forgiveness to his foes. A corpse hastily buried in a borrowed tomb. A host with wounded hands, cooking a fish breakfast for his friends on the shores of Galilee. The everliving One, The Alpha and the Omega, separated by a cloud from his disciples, so that he might incognito be with them always. This is our King – so different from the worldly view of a king that it seems absurd.”***

### Conclusion

As we come to the end of the Christian year we are brought face-to-face with this new type of king. We are reminded to worship this king of reconciliation that brings us back to our God. We are reminded to commit our ways to him and we shall know his peace in our lives, in our hearts and minds. We are reminded not just to pay lip service to our king but to trust him fully with all aspects of our lives.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, we celebrate your reign over the world. We rejoice in the ways that you are quietly, yet constantly moving the world in accord with your purposes. We give thanks that you have not abandoned the world, or us, to our own devices but that you continue actively to love us and work with us and for us. Use us, we pray, to be more active participants in your reign, to spread your light into the world, to do our part to testify to your Lordship, and to do our part to bring the world to worship you as Lord and King. Amen.