

Reflection for Christ the King. Luke 23: 33 to 43

At first sight it may seem a little odd that, as we approach Advent with our minds fixed upon Christmas, the Birth of Christ, the Gospel reading for today is very much a part of the Easter story, but the clue comes in the title of the day; Christ the King. The title of King immediately conjures up the symbol of authority, power and might. Herein lies the enigma; Christ the King but nailed upon a cross in great humility. The paradoxical nature of Christ's kingship, the priority of the poor, and the cost of salvation, Luke is showing us the absurdity of claiming that someone crucified must also be a King. We notice the contemptuous 'ifs,' the Ruler's sneer 'If this is the Christ of God, the chosen one,' the soldiers are equally mocking, 'If you are the king of the Jews....' And yet and yet... The whole concept of Christ's Kingship and authority are a challenge to our understanding of power.

The Jews had been promised a Messiah, a figure foretold and long expected. What then were they expecting? Their hope was for an all-powerful King who would take control. Instead, Jesus comes born in humble circumstances to an ordinary family - not at all what was expected. We learn from Jesus of his love of those who counted for little, for the poor to whom the good news is announced, and to whom the Kingdom of God is promised. Here at the cross Luke is careful to distinguish them from the others, the common people, the poor, stand and watch. When it is all over, they turn and walk away in sadness and despair.

So, Christ is King, where does he reign? He reigns in places where, here as well as in heaven, wisdom, justice and righteousness prevail. Few earthly kingdoms or republics either meet those criteria but there are those odd corners, some very odd, where they do things differently, where the topsy turvy world of the Kingdom of God and of his Christ is already functioning. We are now looking forward to Advent, the end of the Christian year. The Jesus that Luke shows us came to seek and save the lost. So, we too must care for the weak, the poor, the dispossessed and destitute, for all who struggle, for each other, for the world around us. It is an intrinsic part of our Christian belief to love and care for each other just as God continues to love and care for us whilst giving us the freewill to do things on our own without interference.

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