

**Sunday 24th November 2019
St David's, Exeter**

**Jeremiah 23 v 1-6
Colossians 1 v 11-20
Luke 23 v 33-43**

CHRIST THE KING

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen

Today we celebrate Christ the King. That was -after all - the ironic, mocking superscription on his Cross - as we were reminded just now in our Gospel reading. THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

This morning I want us to consider: What sort of King, What sort of Kingdom and then what sort of citizens of that Kingdom are we? (And there might just be a little surprise at the end)

(But) First of all - on a somewhat lighter note - I thought I would see how well

you know your Kings and their Kingdoms. - Are you ready - here - as they say is your starter for 10

Which King said:

A horse, a horse my Kingdom for a horse

Richard 3rd - at the battle of Bosworth Field.

I don't think he got back on any horse and he certainly lost his Kingdom, which he had acquired through murdering the princes in the Tower. For a bonus point -Where did he end up and was discovered not so long ago.

Under a car park in Leicester

OK - let's see how you get on with this one:

Which King said - when he was trying to sort out - 'who should inherit what' - concerning his Kingdom.

'Nothing will come of Nothing - Speak again

King Lear to his youngest daughter Cordelia

- Succession planning for his Kingdom - didn't turn out so well did it? - A warning to us all perhaps that we shouldn't sell up and go to live with our daughters. Or if we do - make sure we pick the right one.

Thirdly

Which King said - to his step-daughter, If you'll dance for me - I'll give you up to half of my Kingdom

King Herod

And prompted by her mother - she said she'd rather have - what? - John the Baptist's head on a platter.

Well - perhaps this isn't a fair representation of Kings and their Kingdoms but:

**The murderous pursuit of power
Foolish succession planning
And the lecherous abuse of power -(if you follow Oscar Wilde's version of events)**

didn't exactly mean they continued 'Happy and Glorious - long to reign over us'

**Richard 3 entombed in a Car Park
Lear dies of grief, holding his dead daughter Cordelia , the only one who really loved him**

- and Herod dies in exile, banished by the Emperor Caligula.

Some examples then of how Kingship can go badly wrong.

But it wasn't exactly looking rosy for Jesus - on the Cross - was it? Perhaps the scorn from one of the other prisoners was justified.

**Kings and Kingdoms come and go -
What makes the Kingdom of God so
different? Why do we celebrate Christ
the King today?**

**Surely the answer to that question
begins with understanding the answer
Christ gave to the so called - 'dying
thief'**

**Who said - let's remind ourselves - Lord
remember me when you come into your
Kingdom.**

**And who received the reply - I tell you -
Today you will be with me in Paradise.**

**What's that all about? Well it certainly
wasn't about Jesus establishing an
earthly Kingdom as some of his
followers expected**

**This Kingdom is established by the
death of its King. It's the classic
example of Victory being snatched from
the Jaws of Defeat**

**It was just the beginning of a Kingdom
that is very much alive today - along
with its King**

**You see - The Kingdom of God is a
Spiritual phenomenon - a virtual reality
to use a modern phrase.**

**I suggest to you - at it's simplest - if you
want to understand the Kingdom of God
you have to grasp what sort of King
Jesus is.**

**He was not - is not - ruthless in his
pursuit of power, abusive with that
power or unwise with the succession
planning of that power as we have
noted with our historical and fictional
Kings.**

**He is the Servant King (That's the key
concept that unlocks the whole
Kingdom of God thing) - The Servant
King who sacrificed his life for our sin
on the cross and rose again - in order
that we might have a right relationship**

with God. One dying thief got it - the other didn't. Do you? Do I?

So Jesus Christ is the Servant King (That's the answer to the first question I posed) and the Kingdom of Heaven to put it at its simplest - is where Jesus is. Or as St Paul put it 'Christ in you - the Hope of Glory.'

This Kingdom was prophesied by Jeremiah amongst others as a Kingdom in the Line of King David where Truth and Justice would reign. The King of that Kingdom would look after the people like a Good Shepherd.

In our other reading from Colossians we get another wonderful picture of the Kingdom of God being a Kingdom of Light. Col 1 v 13 'He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son, he loves. It's a Kingdom of Light.'

So the Kingdom of God is a virtual reality where Love, Truth and Justice reign and where the King of Kings is in

fact the Servant of all. In that sense it is profoundly paradoxical - death leads to life - and counter - cultural - the master of all is the servant of all.

Are we in it now - yes I believe we are - we're born into it when we accept that the Risen Christ died for our sin. That's the heart of the Gospel message.

Is it also something to be looked forward to - this Kingdom of God - Yes I think so - there is both a Now and Not Yet aspect to the Kingdom of God. Now we see in a mirror dimly - then face to face.

So Jesus is the Servant King and the Kingdom of God is where Jesus is and where an attitude of service is evident in loving our neighbours as ourselves and in living in Truth.

And now some final thoughts on the nature of our responsibilities as citizens of this Kingdom.

How do we live this Kingdom Life?

Lets go back to King Lear just for a moment who made such a mess of planning for the continuation of his Kingdom. Not so Christ the King ,who gives us the precious gift of his Holy Spirit in order to establish and continue his Kingdom.

It's very important that we ask ourselves ' Are we, by the power of his Spirit, Christ-like citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. Does our behaviour mark us out as those whose guiding principles are Love and Truth' - Are we servants of this Kingdom in the sense that we follow Christ - the Servant King.

That's the challenge I put to you and to myself this morning. It's a big ask. Just think for a moment what your family, the people in your work place, your school, your college think of you. They won't think in terms of the Kingdom of Heaven but they'll know if you are genuine in your faith or not. Would it

be a surprise for them to know you profess to be a Christian?

Now - It's right and proper for those of us who have the responsibility and privilege of standing up here to challenge from Holy Scripture - but this morning I want to end by saying something a little bit different. I have felt - as I have been preparing this sermon - that it's important to take the opportunity - as a relative newcomer to this church - to encourage you and say - When I look around you all - I give thanks to God for every one of you because I can see Kingdom values of Love and Truth in you. I can see Christ in you - in so many different ways. I can see so much evidence of his Holy Spirit in your lives. Yes, I can see the struggles too as I experience them in my own life. I see some of you seeking, not quite sure - and I encourage you to keep on searching. I also see many of you contributing your special talents to help build the Kingdom of God in this place. That makes me want to thank God.

Let's all thank God for Jesus - Christ the King - The Servant King, who by his Holy Spirit enables us to serve him as we pray - Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

May this be true for us. Amen