

Sunday November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023; Christ the King. Benefice  
Holy Communion, Oswaldkirk

Today we celebrate the feast of Christ the King, risen, ascended, and glorified. We give thanks to God for all he has done for us through Jesus and for the difference He makes to our lives. Here is a King who is prepared to suffer alongside us, who experiences betrayal, savage injustice, brutal cruelty, and utter humiliation and yet maintains his dignity and integrity. This is a King who has lived life as we live it, who has died as we must die but who now lives a new resurrection life which He offers to all and reassures us and welcomes us into that same resurrection life in his Kingdom where we will know the peace and transformation for which we have longed. In this picture we are getting a glimpse of the sort of kingship that can meet our deepest spiritual inner needs, the needs we sometimes dare not even face ourselves and which certainly aren't met by the rulers of this world.

Throughout the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus' teaching has announced and illustrated the kingdom of God, that does not function like an earthly kingdom and today Jesus describes the events when all the kingdoms of the world are finally gathered before him, and the true motives and characters of people will be revealed and judged.

This picture of Kingship turns traditional understanding upside down. It reaches out to us calling us to turn to receive Christ the King and seek a vision to give meaning and purpose to our lives. In return our companion will be Christ the Son of Man who knows what it is to be human. Our vision will then become one of love's victory over death and of Christ the King who will draw us into his eternal kingdom. His kingship will make all the difference in a world where things seem out of control, chaotic and heading from bad to worse, the with the difference being

that we know we are blessed and know a King who brings real justice and peace, who sees the needy, and who hears the cries of the oppressed. Jesus says that whenever the righteous gave food to the hungry, welcomed a stranger, clothed the naked, or visited the sick or imprisoned, they acted in kindness toward him, and will inherit His Kingdom. On the other hand, those who have failed to see the needs of the disadvantaged have acted as though they have never seen Him, have not followed in His footsteps and have not displayed who the real King is. We are therefore called to bear witness to Christ as King, not to ourselves or our motives or agenda's but in all things to be His messengers and servants and point to God's kingdom, to live as St Paul encourages the Ephesians, *'so you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints.'*

He then goes on to describe why this hope is true, *'God put this power to work in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name, not only in this age but in the age to come.'*

Between these two events - the beginning and the end, the Kingdom is amongst us, with the followers of Jesus today, that is you and me. Whatever we say or do, it is not about making our mark, or seeking praise or recognition; it is about pointing to the King. In demonstrations of meekness and mercy, in peace-making, the kingdom is like a mustard seed growing when the lost are found, the sick are healed, when people realise, they are loved, and are set free from the bonds of guilt and sin they are trapped in, when those who are dying have the light of hope and those who mourn are comforted. If we look at Jesus' life, we can see how inclusive his Kingdom is intended to be where everyone is welcome. Each time someone finds that welcome home

amongst God's people, the Kingdom grows bigger. Each time someone discovers their worth as a child of God, the Kingdom dawns. When people discover their talents and are enabled to use them for good, the Kingdom comes amongst us. So, look around and see, and let us strive to ensure the Kingdom is growing here and now, in our little community with Christ as King.

Today the church's year comes to a finale with Christ the King. Next Sunday, the first Sunday in Advent, the greatest story starts again. Let us pray that we will allow His spirit to make a difference in our lives and enable us to bring us refreshment, peace, and the power of His Kingdom of love to others and whatever else our hearts need for the journey that lies ahead. Thanks be to God. Amen.