

Christ the King

Sunday the 21st of November 2021

Angels From The Realms Of Glory,
Wing Your Flight Over All The Earth;
Ye Who Sang Creation's Story
Now Proclaim Messiah's Birth.
Come And Worship, Come And Worship,
Worship Christ, The Newborn King.

Background:

As we come to the last Sunday in the Church calendar, one of the joys is celebrating Christ as the King. I should say – the KING of Kings. Traditionally, this Service magnifies Jesus' kingship through the adoration of His people through the singing of hymns, the reading of the scriptures, and sharing in the sacrament of Holy Communion. Before we quickly jump into Advent – which commences next week, today, we sit in awe of the completed work of the LORD Jesus Christ.

We are so blest: the LORD has inspired countless men and women to compose many hymns to assist us as God's people to adore God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet today, we focus on Christ as King of kings.

When I was at the Cathedral in Sale, I anticipated the Christ the King Service in the Diocesan calendar as part of my role as the presenter and Assistant Priest. This occasion was when representatives from all of the Diocese would travel the many hours to attend the planned afternoon Service. All the clergy would be expected to be in attendance and to be robed. All the extra chairs would be organised, even in the adjacent building where the Service was piped in. Why, you may ask? The Bishop and the Dean of the Day desired an outward expression of the whole Diocese united under the Kingship of God. You can imagine the singing – the rich liturgy and the humble sermon faithfully preached by one appointed by the Bishop.

Then, of course, was the great fellowship that followed. To close the day, still allowing adequate time for people to travel home, we all sang what became a Gippsland Anthem. ***To God, be the glory, great things he has done.***

Now is not a time of reminiscing – but instead assisting us all to draw closer to our LORD, who is the KING of Kings, Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

Opening prayer:

Heavenly Father, we join our prayer with the Psalmist: Your Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. May the words of my lips and the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.

Body:

I now turn to the text set for today: It is from the book of Revelation. As you know, the Revelation was given to the apostle John by the resurrected and ascended Lord Jesus:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. (Revelation 1:4-5)

Let us all rejoice with the reality of the resurrected and Ascended LORD Jesus giving this Revelation. One of the great joys, this text was given to edify the people of God further. The persecutions of God's Church, God's people, had begun. The Risen LORD Jesus was reminding them to hold fast to the faith they have. Jesus also reminds them that he has no equal:

from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Jesus is the ruler of the kings of the earth. How comforting this must have been to those who were facing persecutions. Notice that they were not removed from that persecution; they were reminded that the One in whom they have placed their faith has no equal. No one can take them from Him. He is the ruler of all the kings of the earth. This fact is further clarified in the epistle written to the church at Colossae:

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶ for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. (1:15-16)

Albeit Jesus was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, he pre-existed. And we hear in this text that he was the co-creator and the beneficiary of that creation. The crucified, resurrected and ascended Lord Jesus has no equals: No wonder our opening hymn included such majestic words:

**Let every tribe and every tongue
To him, their hearts enthral,
Lift high the universal song
And crown him Lord of all.**

Our text from Revelation also praises the LORD Jesus:

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Before we focus on the appropriate response we are called to have towards Jesus Christ the KING, let's rejoice afresh in the work and mission of Jesus:

who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father

1. Jesus is motivated by love: this should not surprise us, as the scripture reveals that God is love.
2. Freed us from our sins by his blood – of course, this statement is referring to his act of reconciliation where Jesus made the atoning sacrifice upon the Cross. Through the shedding of his innocent blood, sin or the penalty of sin no longer has dominion over us – we are free
3. Free to serve God the Father by being crafted into the Kingdom of God. By honouring the Son, we also honour the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.

Crown him with many crowns
The Lamb upon the throne
Hark! How the heavenly anthem drowns
All music but its own:
Awake my soul and sing
Of him who died for thee
And hail him as thy matchless KING
Through all eternity.

Now turning back to the church at Colossae:

¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his Cross.

'Making peace through the blood of the cross'. This statement is concise and accurate. Every time Fr Ernest or I celebrate Holy Communion, we are all reminded of the centrality of the Cross of Christ to the Christian faith. For it is at the Cross the mission of reconciliation humanity back to God.

I wish to draw your attention to verse 18

He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.

Jesus is the head of the BODY of the Church. The emphasis on Word and Sacrament is a reality that our Anglo-Catholic traditions resonate. The phrase 'Word and Sacrament' is so elevated because it is the Revelation of God as we honour the word of God so that we can truly honour him as the head of the Church, Jesus the KING of kings.

At the name of Jesus
Every knee will bow,
Every tongue confess him
King of glory now.
Tis the Father's pleasure
We should call him LORD,
Who was from the beginning
Was the mighty word.

To God be glory forever!

Resources:

Leon Morris; Tyndale New Testament Commentaries -Revelation

Michale Wilcock; Bible Speaks Today – the Message of Revelation

F F Bruce; The New International Commentary on the New Testament – Colossians.

IVP; New Dictionary of Theology