

## Reign of Christ - Introduction

*Jeremiah 23:1-6*

*Colossians 1:11-20*

*Luke 23:33-43*

How can we talk about "Christ the King"?

If we read the Gospel stories carefully, we will see that when people tried to make Jesus a king, he rejected it and walked away. We also read the only times he is called the "King of the Jews" it is with accusation and sarcasm.

The imagery of Christ the King did not emerge as a major image until after the conversion of Constantine – the first Christian Roman Emperor and with that conversion everything changed.

This year is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the institution of the feast of Christ the King. It started at a time when Europe saw the rise of fascism:

The institution of this feast was, therefore, almost an act of defiance from the Church against all those who at that time were seeking to absolutize their own political ideologies, insisting boldly that no earthly power, no particular political system or military dictatorship is ever absolute. Rather, only God is eternal and only the Kingdom of God is an absolute value, which never fails. *Elaine Ledgerwood*

## Reign of Christ - Introduction to the theme

Today is Christ the King Sunday- What is a King? What do they do? Let's look back at a few kings over history to see what they did.

A medieval king was expected to win battles, win territories, manage armies and negotiate treaties. They were in charge of the state and the populace and managed the revenues. They live lives of grandeur and it helped if he produced heirs. Monarchs such as Henry VIII and Louis XIV (Sun King who reigned for 72 years) met some of these requirements and in addition seized power and changed kingship to their advantage. Henry VIII broke with Rome, an extraordinary move that transformed the nature and power of the king in England. And, in France, Louis XIV inaugurated the idea of the absolute monarch.

Modern kings and queens are symbolic without the powers of their predecessors. So King Charles III might have advocated for climate change, organic farming and issues you might hope would transcend politics through the decades, but for him to talk about it as king now would mean that he was exceeding his constitutional role. It's a strange paradox. He has a great deal of symbolic authority, but this authority is granted on the basis that it won't be used as a form of influence.

There are others such as The Sultan of Yogyakarta and the region on the island of Java. He is educated, wise, looked up to and well liked by his people.

No doubt you can think of many more kings of past and present and maybe future from across the world. There is another to mention.....

In the coming weeks we will hear more about this king. According to historical accounts, Herod the Great was the regional king of Judea, which contained the

cities of Bethlehem and Jerusalem. He ruled at a time when Jesus was born and Judea was under Roman command.

Herod constructed the city of Herodium; the extravagant harbour [at Caesarea Maritima](#), on the Mediterranean Coast; and [the mountain fortress of Masada](#), which was located in the middle of the unforgiving desert near the Dead Sea. He remodelled the temple to a much more grandiose structure than Solomon's original temple. This is the king in the time of Jesus.

Christ the King – Christ in Majesty – the central frame of the Altarpiece completed in 1432. The 20 panel shows "Adoration of the Mystic Lamb" in St Bravo's Cathedral, Ghent, described as one of Europe's artistic masterpieces. It symbolises redemption and representation of Jesus Christ, Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

*Margaret Banks*

## Reign of Christ - Reflection

As Elaine said in the introduction, the Feast of Christ the King was instituted 100 years ago -- in the midst of times not unlike our own -- to honour and reaffirm the true kingship of Christ, to remind us that earthly governments and rulers are transient, but Christ's reign is eternal.

This Sunday, emphasizing Christ's dominion, is a fitting end to the liturgical church year -- one commentator calls it our quasi-New Year's Eve. The new church year commences next Sunday with Advent – the emblem of God's loving intervention into human life.

Each of today's scriptures enriches our understanding of Jesus and his kingdom.

At the time in Israel's history when Jeremiah was prophesying, David's kingly line was petering out -- with questions about the legitimacy of those occupying the throne. At the same time, it was becoming inevitable that Judah was about to be overtaken by Babylon. Jeremiah, using the common ancient Near Eastern image of king as shepherd, bemoans the troubling recent history of greedy and self-serving kings. Their ill-judged military ventures resulted only in the Israelites being dispersed from their homeland and scattered. The earthly kings of God's people bore little resemblance to a caring, protective, nurturing shepherd.

Jeremiah prophesies that the Lord will raise up a new leader from the house of David, a shepherd who will be obedient and trustworthy, who will gather his scattered flock – everyone. "He shall reign as king and deal wisely, and execute justice and righteousness in the land."

God's realm is characterised by wise and loving kingship.

Luke's telling of Jesus's crucifixion is rich in examples of what the Kingdom is like. First that the kingdom is unambiguously not of this world. Jesus was invited, and declined, to magically extricate himself – to aspire to earthly power. And he said that his kingdom started now. Secondly, even in pain and in the face of certain death, Jesus forgave those who treated him so contemptuously and brutally. His mercy has no boundaries. Thirdly, Jesus understands the worst of our pain and bears ours with us.

If we accept that Jesus's kingdom is here and now, we must act out his call for justice, care for all his people in our community and in the wider world.

The verses in Colossians describe Jesus as the “fullness of God” – he is all things godly, the first born, all powerful, the head of the church – everything good. Once Jesus came to earth, God's kingdom was transferred to Jesus's kingship. This kingdom is about peace, justice and mercy.

As members of this kingdom, we are able to share in this power, and to be redeemed and forgiven. We also receive grace to live proactively, to seek justice and mercy for all of God's children and to live with gratitude and endurance.

Acknowledging Christ as King is not merely a theological statement; it is a call to action. It involves assuming humility over pride, service over power, forgiveness over vengeance. It's entirely appropriate that we hear today about all that Act for Peace does.

As we celebrate this solemnity, may we renew our commitment to living under his reign, and as citizens of this kingdom bearing witness to his love and justice in all we do.

*Ann Hammer*