

Materials for Virtual Worship
Sunday next before Advent, 21 November 2021
Christ the King

Please use this material with the order of Virtual Service for the Linton Team of Churches
Ordinary Time

Collect

Eternal Father,
whose Son Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven
that he might rule over all things as Lord and King:
keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit
and in the bond of peace,
and bring the whole created order to worship at his feet;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Readings

Daniel 7:9-10; 13-14

Judgement before the Ancient One

As I watched,
thrones were set in place,
and an Ancient One took his throne;
his clothing was white as snow,
and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames,
and its wheels were burning fire.
A stream of fire issued
and flowed out from his presence.
A thousand thousand served him,
and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him.
The court sat in judgement,
and the books were opened. As I watched in the night visions,
I saw one like a human being
coming with the clouds of heaven.

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And he came to the Ancient One
and was presented before him.
To him was given dominion
and glory and kingship,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not pass away,
and his kingship is one
that shall never be destroyed.

John 18:33-37

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered, 'Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?' Pilate replied, 'I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?' Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.' Pilate asked him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.'

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Reflection

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Life is full of ambiguities and nowhere is this more so than in God's relationship with the world. In fact, it is in ambiguity where we most fully engage with God.

Today's Feast of Christ the King raises this ambiguity: when is a king not a king? In essence it is the question posed by Pilate when he met Jesus and asked him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' The question appears simple enough but Jesus' unexpected response, 'Is this something you have concluded yourself?' throws Pilate into a bit of confusion. Either Jesus is a king, in which case he is setting himself up against Rome to be a threat to Caesar and should be removed, or he is not.

But actually, the issue is not quite as simple as that. Let's take some ordinary everyday examples of the ambiguous way we use the word 'king'. For example:

If I am playing chess and you threaten my king, then the king I am looking at is a very small piece of wood. If I order a king-sized bed it seems to imply the king person who occupies this bed is over six feet high and almost as wide! But equally a king could be a ruler, a warrior, a political leader, a tyrant, a lawmaker or benevolent dictator. Then there are others such as Elvis who for his fans was known simply as 'the king'.

No wonder Pilate is confused especially when Jesus says, 'my kingdom is not from this world.' For how can a king be a ruler if he has no one or no land to rule? Then just for a moment it seems that Pilate has very vaguely grasped that Jesus could be a king but in a non-earthly way, 'So you are a king?' he says. But he hasn't quite understood its meaning and the moment passes.

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What I love about this dialogue between Pilate and Jesus is Pilate's struggle to understand and Jesus' provocative questions and answers in matters of truth. We know Jesus is the 'way, the truth and the life' and there he is standing in front of Pilate, but just after this scene Pilate asks Jesus, 'what is truth?' How could Pilate be so stupid when the truth is staring him in the face?

But we shouldn't be so quick to judge Pilate, for the truth is also staring us in the face but we have to distinguish it from all other earthly truths. Truth is ambiguous. That's the way it goes; we, like Pilate, struggle with it until something happens and we see things differently.

Take these two examples of a vase and a tree. They remain a vase and a tree until I or someone else prompts you to see



the vase as two faces and the tree as an ape and a lion and then the pictures flits ambiguously from one to the other. Our experience of God can also be like this; we can see the world in its everyday form but then perhaps through prayer, reading the Bible, listening to music, a deep conversation, can trigger us to see it differently as something God-given and extraordinary. Annoyingly it doesn't always remain like this and can just as easily flip back to the ordinary again.

So perhaps we can now understand why Jesus never claims to be king but nor does he deny it. He wants it to be ambiguous. What he says to Pilate is, 'You say I am a king. For this I was born ... to testify to the truth.' (John 18:37) What Jesus is saying is that we should ponder on what king and kingship means, especially when applied to God, causing the vast experience of others to see beyond the obvious to what lies hidden in ambiguity. And to do that we have Jesus' life of the king who

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was a servant to others; the majesty of the God who inspires in us deep respect not fear, to which as Ashley Cooper says in his hymn 'I can but bow'; God, as described in Daniel's vision, as the Ancient One (Daniel 7:10) as the source of cosmic awe and devotion; and most fundamental of all as the Welsh hymn writer Henry Baker began his hymn, the experience of Christ as the 'king of love'.

Jesus said to Pilate, 'Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.' Yes, listen we must but we know that Jesus' voice will be provocative, sometimes confusing and at times beyond our comprehension because God's world is ambiguous and to understand it at its deepest level will always pass all human understanding. But it is the struggle to understand which is spiritually enriching and is ultimately what makes life worthwhile, so continue to read the Bible, study, pray, discuss provocatively and meditate on those moments when, however indistinct they might be, your picture of the world changes and then in the words of John Mason, you shall 'sing that Majesty which angels do admire'.

Michael Wilcockson

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Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory (Battle Hymn)

1 Mine eyes have seen the glory
Of the coming of the Lord
He is tramping out the vintage
Where the grapes of wrath are stored
He has loosed the fateful lightning
Of His terrible swift sword
His truth is marching on

Chorus

Glory glory hallelujah (x3)
His truth is marching on

2 I have seen Him in the watchfires
Of a hundred circling camps
They have gilded Him an altar
In the evening dews and damps
I can read His righteous sentence
By the dim and flaring lamps
His day is marching on

Chorus

3 He has sounded forth the trumpet
That shall never sound retreat
He is sifting out all human hearts
Before His judgment seat
O be swift my soul to answer Him
Be jubilant my feet
Our God is marching on

Chorus

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4 In the beauty of the lilies
Christ was born across the sea
With a glory in His bosom
That transfigures you and me
As He died to make us holy
Let us live that all be free
Whilst God is marching on

Chorus

The King Of Love (Dominus Regit Me)

1 The King of love my Shepherd is
Whose goodness faileth never
I nothing lack if I am His
And He is mine forever

2 Where streams of living water flow
My ransomed soul He leadeth
And where the verdant pastures grow
With food celestial feedeth

3 Perverse and foolish oft I strayed
But yet in love He sought me
And on His shoulder gently laid
And home rejoicing brought me

4 In death's dark vale I fear no ill
With Thee dear Lord beside me
Thy rod and staff my comfort still
Thy cross before to guide me

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5 Thou spread'st a table in my sight
Thy unction grace bestoweth
And O what transport of delight
From Thy pure chalice floweth

6 And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never
Good Shepherd may I sing Thy praise
Within Thy house forever

King of kings majesty

1 King of kings majesty
God of heaven living in me
Gentle Saviour closest friend
Strong deliv'rer beginning and end
All within me falls at Your throne

Chorus
Your majesty I can but bow
I lay my all before You now
In royal robes I don't deserve
I live to serve Your majesty

2 Earth and heav'n worship You
Love eternal faithful and true
Who bought the nations ransomed souls
Brought this sinner near to Your throne
All within me cries out in praise

Chorus

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Deck Thyself My Soul With Gladness (Schmucke Dich)

1 Deck thyself my soul with gladness
Leave the gloomy haunts of sadness
Come into the daylight's splendour
There with joy thy praises render
Unto Him whose grace unbounded
Hath this wondrous banquet founded
High o'er all the heav'ns He reigneth
Yet to dwell with thee He deigneth

2 Now I sink before Thee lowly
Filled with joy most deep and holy
As with trembling awe and wonder
On Thy mighty works I ponder
How by mystery surrounded
Depth no mortal ever sounded
None may dare to pierce unbidden
Secrets that with Thee are hidden

3 Sun who all my life dost brighten
Light who dost my soul enlighten
Joy which through my spirit floweth
Fount which life and health bestoweth
At Thy feet I cry my Maker
Let me be a fit partaker
Of this blessed food from heaven
For our good Thy glory given

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4 Jesus Bread of Life I pray Thee
Let me gladly here obey Thee
Never to my hurt invited
Be Thy love with love requited
From this banquet let me measure
Lord how vast and deep its treasure
Through the gifts Thou here dost give me
As Thy guest in heav'n receive me

Christ Triumphant Ever Reigning (Guiting Power)

1 Christ triumphant ever reigning
Saviour Master King
Lord of heaven our lives sustaining
Hear us as we sing

Chorus
Yours the glory and the crown
The high renown
The eternal name

2 Word incarnate truth revealing
Son of Man on earth
Power and majesty concealing
By Your humble birth

Chorus

3 Suffering servant scorned ill treated
Victim crucified
Death is through the cross defeated
Sinners justified

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Chorus

4 Priestly king enthroned for ever
High in heaven above
Sin and death and hell shall never
Stifle hymns of love

Chorus

5 So our hearts and voices raising
Through the ages long
Ceaselessly upon You gazing
This shall be our song

Chorus

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Closing Prayer

Stir up, O Lord,
the wills of your faithful people;
that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by
you be plenteously rewarded;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.