

Sermon Sunday the 20th November 2016

Psalm 46 and Luke 23: 33 – 43

Today we celebrate the day dedicated in the Churches Lectionary to Christ the King; this day and celebration precedes the beginning of Advent next week when we celebrate Jesus coming into the world as the light of the world. We are moving from darkness into light when God himself appeared on earth in His Son Jesus Christ. So straight of; point one. This moving from darkness to light and vice versa is very like our own Christian lives when we have moments of doubt, shut God and the teachings of Jesus out, adopt a human approach and get it wrong and be unable or unwilling to admit it. Periods of darkness; I know I have been there in all these areas and I hope you are honest enough to admit this also but I also know that when I admit them and ask for forgiveness and the strength not to do it again God hears and the light is restored.

So then, why during the last moments of Jesus on the cross are we celebrating Christ the King? We have to unpack the elements in the Reading from Luke.

Firstly, the mocking of Jesus by the leaders. As human beings we expect much of our leaders and we listen to the rhetoric and put them in power; however experience tells us that eventually we will question, turn against them or turn to someone else. Examples EU referendum and the realisation of the outcome and Trumps election, how long will it be before the voters realise his rhetoric is not going to happen. So the Jewish leaders mocked Jesus perhaps knowing who He was but unwilling to admit it. Jesus by his very attitude on the Cross is still showing forgiveness, a truly kingly virtue even when suffering death. Look at the telling words in verse 34 'FATHER FORGIVE THEM FOR THEY DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING.' We know from subsequent writings that many Jewish Leaders became Christians so they have the forgiveness of God for their actions and words because of Jesus asking God to forgive them.

So the second point here I think for us is that the way to the kingdom of Heaven is through the Cross and Jesus' sacrifice for you and me when

our sins like those of the Jewish leaders who became Christians were forgiven. Again this is showing Jesus as Christ the King.

The Roman soldiers; put simply they did not know how right they were. They mocked and put up a notice saying in verse 38 'THERE WAS A WRITTEN NOTICE ABOVE HIM WHICH READ THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.' Bartimaeus on the road to the road to Jerusalem at Jericho hailed Jesus as the Son of David; an echo from the writings in Isaiah who prophesied that Jesus would come from the line of David, a king.

Finally the two men, criminals, crucified with Christ. One joins in taunting or mocking Jesus the same way as the Jewish leaders and soldiers telling him to save himself and them. The second one though admits that they were rightly punished for crimes they had committed and in verse 42 says 'REMEMBER ME WHEN YOU COME INTO YOUR KINGDOM' and in verse 43 Jesus responds 'I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, TODAY YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE.' The criminal repented his past criminal and life and Jesus forgave him. So the third point for us; time and time again in the New Testament Jesus tells us that we have to confess our sins and until we do we will not receive forgiveness and eternal life. Even Peter as one of the leading disciples is told by Jesus he could not be a disciple until he had confessed that he was a sinner. So we can learn from the criminal and Peter and seek forgiveness and God will grant it.

So throughout his death on the cross Jesus is carrying on His mission of reconciling those who confess their sins with God. The reading shows that right to the very end Jesus is opening up the kingdom of heaven to sinners hence the reason we celebrate Christ the King today.

To finish then to receive God the Father God the Son and God the Holy Spirit as the Psalmist tells us in Psalm 46 verse 10 'BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.' A good discipline for us all.

Let us pray. Bring us Lord to repentance in the end. Make us never too proud to admit our faults. In our own trials in life let us feel solidarity with your own trials so that one day you will take us to join you in your kingdom. Amen.