

## Christ the King

Today is Christ the King Sunday – and as usual when I'm given a topic to preach on I start asking lots of questions.

I assumed that I would find that it originated hundreds of years ago – but was intrigued to find that this day was only designated such in 1925 - only 100 years ago. It was as the world was emerging from the Great War as it was called then (WW1 as we now know it), there was much economic depression and a rise in secularism which Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany were capitalising on in a most worrying way. Pope Pius XI directed churches to set aside one Sunday to declare that Christ was King and reigned above all earthly powers.

It should remind us all that Jesus's kingship contradicts the worldly expectations of power, privilege and authority and provides through his living example a model for how we should be living our own lives. Unlike empires that are built by force, Jesus's kingdom is established on love – and transforms lives each and every day.

The official title for today is actually "The solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe".

This special day was originally held in mid October, but in 1970 it was decided that it should be moved in the liturgical calendar to the very last Sunday of Ordinary Time. So it comes as an absolute full stop in the church year and the appropriate moment to reflect and recognise Christ's divine authority. The best has been saved for the last. Next Sunday we will start all over again at the very beginning with the First Sunday of Advent.

But today, we proclaim Christ's universal authority and kingship over all of creation and every aspect of our lives. An opportunity to remember that whilst earthly powers and governments come and go, Christ's kingdom is eternal and reigns over all for ever and the importance of living in accordance with his teachings and example.

The challenges the world was facing 100 years ago may, or actually may not, be so different from what we are facing today. We are invited on this Sunday to step back and remember who is really in charge. Press the pause button and remember that we're part of something much bigger than ourselves that gives us hope and a purpose – in a world where we may sometimes feel we're out of control.

It's an opportunity for us to reaffirm our commitment and refocus. Making our own personal resolution before the new church year starts.

Now let's have a look at our two readings which both tell us more about Christ's Kingship.

Firstly we have the extract from Paul's letter to the Colossians where he lists 12 ways in which Christ is supreme:

- Image of the invisible God
- Firstborn of creation
- The one for whom all things were created
- The one who was before all things
- The one who held (and holds) all things together
- The head of the body of the church
- The beginning

- The first born from the dead
- The one who has precedence
- The one in whom all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell
- The one through whom God has chosen to reconcile all things
- The one who made peace through the blood of his cross.

Quite a list! The Colossians had been tempted to worship angels and Paul was trying to refocus them on Christ's sovereignty and majesty over all creation - they should have been reserving their worship for Christ – not angels or anything else.

He introduced the metaphor for the church which we use so often ourselves – being the body with Christ as the head. A body has many parts and all are important and have key roles in the function of the body, but the head ultimately controls what happens. Similarly, the church has many parts all of which are vitally important but the head (Christ) is the conductor – orchestrating and directing us all. We should anchor our faith in Christ, submit to his leadership and let him guide our actions and let his peace ease our worries.

Our second reading from Luke illustrates graphically a very moving picture. Christ faces the very worst form of deaths – crucifixion – which was reserved at that time for the very worst of criminals – yet in his suffering and pain he displayed love and compassion to the thief hanging alongside him. This thief recognised that Jesus was the Messiah and therefore had the ability to be able to save himself. But Jesus's mission was to save all of humanity from sin – that is everyone who went before him and everyone after him, including each one of us sitting here, our friends and families – no one is excluded. Jesus's ultimate act of self sacrifice paints a picture of what true royalty looks like in His kingdom – a willingness to serve and love even unto death.

In Jesus's kingdom salvation is offered to all who seek it. It's not just the thief on the cross who Jesus remembers, but all of us – through the pain of crucifixion and in the midst of his separation from God, he chooses to forgive us all. That's a humbling thought. His pain and agony was for us – you and me – wow – can you imagine that!

He teaches us the power of extending grace to others – remember Matthew 5 v44 'love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you' – that's a challenge for us all. Christ the King – the humble servant – rules not with power over people but through love and service.

We should be daily refocusing and constantly rechecking and ensuring we are applying these values to all aspects of our lives – we shouldn't compartmentalise and keep him out of certain areas.

So today it's not just about acknowledging that Christ is King, it's about doing something about it and living differently and recognising we are all part of something much bigger than ourselves. And making our new church year resolution to let Jesus reign in every aspect of our lives.

Amen

**Carol Elsasser, 23 November 2025**