

2019 CHRIST THE KING

King David was the King of Israel from 1010 until 970BC. No other King of Israel came close to him in prestige or in dynamism. His was a powerful reign. He expanded Israel's boundaries far and wide. Many neighbouring Kingdoms paid him tribute in gold and precious goods to secure his good will.

He had a profound relationship with God as is exemplified in the beautiful Psalms that he wrote. Even today some of the Psalms written by King David are enshrined in the Church's Liturgy.

He brought rich blessings upon his people.

But sadly, almost to a man, the kings who followed after King David for the next four hundred years were either corrupt or weak; turning a blind eye when the people worshipped the pagan gods of their neighbours, allowing the powerful to prey on the weak and leading scandalous lives themselves.

After the tragedy of the Babylonian Exile, in 587BC, which was widely interpreted as God's punishment on Israel for the sins of its Kings, Kingship was abandoned in Israel- but an abiding hope lived on that a king, an anointed one, a Messiah, would one day emerge who would enshrine David's spirit; who would, in truth, be a Son of David.

When this Messiah reigned there was an expectation that there would be an abundance of food in Israel, that people of all nations would look to Israel for moral leadership and that God would be universally honoured as Lord.

Jesus strove to fulfil this hope.

When Jesus fed the 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish and 12 baskets of scraps were left over, the crowds knew that a time of great abundance had burst forth- the Messianic era had arrived- and clamoured to make Jesus King.

Jesus sought out the oppressed, the weak and those who lived without hope. He healed them of their diseases and reminded them of their dignity as sons and daughters of God. He taught all people to love one another- giving the promise of a world where justice and of peace would reign.

As He came to the end of His life, Jesus allowed Himself to be honoured as the Messiah- the King of Israel. He allowed Himself to be lavishly anointed by Mary of Bethany before entering the royal City of Jerusalem to the ring of 'Hosanna, Hosanna to the Son of David'.

The Roman Governor, Pilate, heard that many in Jerusalem were regarding Jesus as their King. When Jesus came under his power on the Friday before Passover, Pilate mocked Jesus by clothing Him in royal purple. Jesus was brought before the jeering people, crowned with thorns and hoisted up high on the terrible throne of the Cross with the words above Him: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews".

Yes Jesus was the Son of David- the King of Israel. But He was the strangest King of all time. His crown was a crown of thorns. His throne was a Cross. He came not to conquer but to inspire people to holiness. He did not exact tribute but devoted all of His energy to teaching and healing, ministering to the poor, the confused, the lost and the lonely.

And, as we read in today's Gospel- even as He died He kept on reaching out in love to the helpless.

The criminal- who was being crucified beside Jesus- called out to Jesus in His agony: "Remember me when You come into Your Kingdom". Jesus, Who Himself was struggling for every breath, gave an assurance to this despairing man that he would soon be in paradise, with Jesus himself.

Today the front of our Church is lined with the flags of many nations. Each flag symbolises the millions of people living within these nations. Each person in every nation has been created in a unique act of love by God. Each person has been created for an eternity of rapture beholding the pure being of the Son of God, their King. As St Paul said so magnificently in our 2nd Reading: "God has taken us out of the power of darkness and created a place for us in the kingdom of the Son.

But huge numbers in all the nations of the World are either like the jeerers at the foot of the Cross or the citizens of Jerusalem who looked upon Jesus bearing His Cross and said, "So what? Who cares?"

We are that tiny group at the foot of the Cross beholding our Crucified King. If Christ's Kingdom is to become a reality in the nations of the Earth, symbolised by these flags in our Church, He needs our feet, our hands and our tongues. When we are afire with love for Jesus and for our neighbour; when we forgive the hurts done to us, when we act joyously and speak hopefully of life everlasting, we help to bring about Jesus' Kingship.

May Jesus Kingdom come, may God's will be done on Earth, as it is in heaven.