

Revd Michael Burns  
Christ Church West Wimbledon  
Sermon : November 24th, 2019  
“Christ the King”

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**CHRIST THE KING**

Today, the feast of Christ the King is a day when we celebrate Jesus as our wonderful, everlasting King. Throughout the Bible, we read of the promises of God that he would send his people a king – a good king whose kingdom would last forever. But God also knew his people all too well – and he knew that they had the characteristics of sheep. So God chose his king to be a shepherd – a shepherd who would go and search for his lost sheep and bring them safely home again. The prophet Jeremiah puts it this way: “Be assured, I am in control, says God. I will raise up a wise King”. Paul speaks of Christ as the King, acting as the focal point holding all things together. In Luke we hear again the account of the crucifixion with the clearly written notice above the dying Jesus which read “This is the King of the Jews”.

So it is that we can say with certainty – Jesus Christ is our King. But note that he is not a King who is detached and distant and isolated and who doesn’t know his people. Quite the opposite – he is the sort of king who knows each of us by name, who searches for us when we are lost and looks after us when we are found.

The image of Jesus Christ the King hanging on the cross is one which we can all too easily overlook, mainly because it is a picture with which we are all too familiar. Yet the cross is such a powerful sign – the vertical is rooted in the earth but reaches high up to heaven; and the horizontal reaches out to embrace the world, to reach out to all humanity. That is captured in the carved cross of Christ the King in the chapel.

As an aside know too that the informal term in churches for this, the last Sunday before the season of Advent, is Stir-up Sunday. It gets its name from the prayer used for today – it’s our post-communion prayer – and it has long been associated with the

custom of making Christmas puddings on this day – although as I’m afraid I don’t eat Christmas pudding I have always ignored such a diktat! But our mothers and grandmothers – yes, generally women only in days long past – would have religiously stuck to this tradition. Most recipes for Christmas pudding require it to be cooked well in advance of Christmas so the collect of the day served as a reminder.

For me and many of you the fact that today is November 24 also means that in exactly one month it will be Christmas Eve!

But to go back to today’s readings. These are enormously reassuring for us to remember and hold on to – especially when we feel we are sinking, especially when we feel we are in danger of being overwhelmed. At those times we need to remember that God is in control, that Christ the King is the focal point holding all things together – for it is the King that we are called to follow – and to follow not only in obedience but also in trust – trusting that he will lead us in the right paths.

For the Lord is a good shepherd and can find any lost sheep, no matter where they have wandered off to, or how dirty and muddy they have become. God comes to the rescue in person, through Jesus, searching out the lost, untangling us from the messy situations in which we can find ourselves and making sure we get safely home to him. I like this modern paraphrase of Psalm 23:

“The Lord is my guide and gives me direction. Every morning I put my life’s work in his hands and every evening I hand my life’s work back to him. He allows me space in my diary for the day, and he creates gaps of quiet in the middle of my busyness. Though I may drift from the path, his hand steers me back. For he is my rock, my foundation, my sure footing and his firm grip will never let me go”.

God will always search for us because he loves us and doesn’t want anyone to be lost. But God has given us all freedom – and so it is up to us whether or not we agree to be rescued by him through his son, Christ the King.

God the Father, help us to hear the call of Christ the King and to follow in his service, whose kingdom has no end, for he reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, one joy, one glory. Amen.