

Sermon for Christ the King
Dorrigo Anglicans
26 November 2023 Year A
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Cast your minds back to the Coronation service of King Charles earlier this year.

Did you watch it?

I certainly did! What a festive occasion, with all the bells, smells and whistles that the Anglican Church can provide!

Each of us had a particular moment that was stood out for us. I wonder what that moment for you?

For me, it was right at the start, after all the grand processions, straight after the anthem “I was glad when they said unto me” – Psalm 122 – which has been used for the entrance of the Monarch since about 1626.

A young boy – a Chorister – Samuel Strachan aged 14, stepped forward, and addressed the King:

Your Majesty, as children of the Kingdom of God we welcome you in the name of the King of Kings.

One of the youngest people present, and alongside all the royalty, heads of state and celebrities present, probably least “important”, and yet here he was greeting and welcoming the new King, in order to start the proceedings.

The King responded: *In his name, and after his example, I come not to be served, but to serve.*

Today we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King. We are reminded that the Kingdom of God is not so much a place as a way of being – a reign of justice, mercy and love that Jesus came to bring (Mark 1:15).

King of Kings is a name given to Jesus in the Bible (Rev 19:16) and Christians believe that he reigns forever as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Unlike many earthly kings or rulers, Jesus Christ came not to wield power by force, but to show the power of love.



Today's readings spell out for us what this servant leadership of Christ our King looks like.

In Matthew we hear how Jesus prioritises the care of *the least of those*.

Mt 25 Verse 40: *I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of those who are members of my family, you did it to me.*

Not how well they cared for the wealthy, powerful, the privileged, those with a voice, but how well they cared for the least, the powerless, those without a voice, those judged to be of little or no economic value, the underprivileged or marginalised.

In Ezekiel God himself is the shepherd who seeks out the sheep and cares for each one. The imagery is similar to some of Jesus' parables.

I'm from the city and have never been responsible for caring for sheep or other livestock, but I know that they're always getting into strife – stuck, strayed, lost or injured.

Ezekiel 34 Verse 16: *I will seek the lost, I will bring back the strayed, I will bind up the injured, strengthen the weak. I will feed them with justice.*

This is not an attitude that says “Oh well, let’s just focus on the strong and healthy ones who haven’t strayed and keep them strong and healthy”; but a commitment to care for the whole flock.

The wise know that that it might be this one sheep who is lost or injured today, but tomorrow it could be any one of the others in the same situation. We share a common humanity, so the welfare of one is the welfare of all. *Just as was done to the least, it was done to me.*

Years ago Anthropologist Margaret Mead was asked what she considered to be the first sign of civilisation in a culture? Everyone expected she’d say, “well the first culture to produce clay pots, fishhooks or grinding stones” or something like that.

But no. She said the first sign of civilisation was a femur (thigh bone) that had been broken and then healed. In primitive cultures, if you broken your leg, you died. You can’t run from danger, hunt for food or go to the river to drink water. You are prey to prowling beasts. But a broken leg that has healed is evidence that someone has helped the injured person, bound up their wound, carried them to safety, given them food and water until they recovered weeks later. Helping the weakest and most vulnerable is where civilisation starts.

Just as was done to the least, it was done to me.

Christ our King is the compassionate leader, found at the margins. Caring for each and every one – at the edge, the strayed, the lost, but also aware of the common good of the whole, which is dependent on the care of the very least.

So today we give thanks for Christ our King

We pray for leaders, such as Charles our King, who models servant leadership – as did his mother our late Queen. In the face of narcissistic, arrogant and egotistical leaders that tear our world apart, we so much need wise, servant leaders who are committed to the common good of the whole flock, not just to their own advancement.

We need to pray for leaders and encourage honest people of integrity to enter politics and take on leadership roles.

Like King Charles at the start of the coronation service, we each here today are welcomed in the name of the King of Kings. May we respond that in the name of the King of Kings, and after his example, we come not to be served, but to serve.

Eternal God, you exalted Jesus Christ to rule over all things and have made us instruments of his Kingdom, by your Spirit enable us to love the unloved, and to minister to all in need, then at the last bring us to your eternal realm where we may be welcomed into your everlasting joy and may worship and adore you forever; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

