

THE FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING

Nic Denny-Dimitriou - 26 November 2006

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## A Prayer of Adoration at the start of worship

Holy God  
With stumbling words and faltering thoughts  
We worship you, as images of your glory, majesty and power  
Sweep across our minds  
The infinite wonder of your created world,  
The intimate wonder of your knowing us  
What else need we do this day other than worship in your holy presence?  
Come, be with us now  
A God of dignity and awe  
Come, be with us now  
A God of tenderness and delight  
Reveal once more the searching love you have for us  
as Father  
Reveal once more the gracious love you have for us  
in Jesus our King & Friend  
Reveal once more the sparkling love you have for us  
in your Holy Spirit

Gracious God, refresh our hearts and minds and souls this day  
As we gather in worship and praise.

## Sermon

What comes to mind when you hear mention of royalty?  
What kind of kings / queens / royalty do you know?

- [If you are a lateral thinker, what comes to mind when you hear mention of Kings and Queens may include “Elvis – King of Rock” and Freddie Mercury from Queen!]
- QE II – recently marked 50 years since her coronation
- Together with Elizabeth, the late British Queen Mother – known for their sense of duty and their graciousness
- Yet many scandals / family problems / and changing expressions of monarchy
- Swazi King Mswati III – controversial re huge expenses and his (most recent) wife number 13
- King Goodwill, King of the Zulu / Kings of the Amahlubi, Amampondo, the Royal Bafokeng tribe (famous for its good use of platinum mining resources)
- Saudi King – anyone may approach for an audience, all are equal as subjects

- OT: Israel had kings, good and bad! King David revered

Kings and queens, in the classic sense:

- Not appointed (at least, not in sense of democratic vote)
- But have the good of the whole kingdom at heart, and therefore also that of all their subjects
- The monarch has the final say on most matters

In practice:

- Do not always have the good of all their people at heart
- May abuse their power, no less than leaders in other political systems / forms of leadership
  
- “Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.”

William Shakespeare, King Henry IV (Part 2, Act 3, Scene 1)

So in the church’s observance of this day, our focus is on Jesus Christ, our King. Where does that focus originate? What is its meaning in an age in which royalty plays less and less of an important role in society? How do we respond at a gut-level to the term, relating to Christ, when kingship today often suggests autocratic rule and our world has shifted away strongly from that kind of rule? How do we acknowledge Christ as sovereign Lord without portraying Him as an unfeeling autocrat?

As a day of special focus, this is less than a hundred years’ old, and was intended to highlight not only the Kingdom of God, but also Christ as King, referring directly to scriptures, some of which we heard today:

A Chronological View from today’s Bible Readings will give us better understanding:

### **Psalm 93:**

- God’s rule is stressed; God is the ruler of the universe, described as on his throne, everlasting, mighty and holy (highlight a few verses)
- Poetic words to describe the majesty of God
- This is One worthy of worship

### **Jeremiah 23: 1-6:**

- Verses 1-4: Criticism of leadership (“shepherds of the flock”) who have led the people astray. Scripture is always uncompromising in criticism of leadership that is unjust and not in the best interests of the those they lead

- Focus on verses 5-6: Prophetic words about the raising up of a King; “one who is to come” – name of “Lord of Righteousness”
- That is an Advent theme in preparation for Christmas, and next Sunday is the First Sunday in Advent: One who HAS come, and yet is also STILL TO COME (the “second coming”)

### **John 18: 33-37**

- Encounter of Jesus with Pilate before the crucifixion
- Jesus refers to “my kingdom”

In this passage Pilate exercises power but Jesus exudes authority. Jesus’ kingship was symbolised by a crown of thorns, and his reign was inaugurated not from a jeweled throne but a wooden cross. His royal purple robes were borrowed and forced upon him. His anointing was not with oil but with blood and sweat and tears. Yet his kingship was the highest form of kingship the world has seen.

### **The Revelation to John 1: 4b – 8:**

- The Resurrected Christ, enthroned [go through verse by verse]

The passage acknowledges that Jesus Christ is King of Kings. (All authority thus derives from God’s ultimate authority – and should be exercised with that in mind.) Jesus is described as the faithful witness to God; such kingship is a model for all in positions of authority. Leadership is given to provide direction (vision); also to set an example through service.

### **Conclusion:**

It is thus interesting to follow the testimony of Scripture, including that of the psalm writer and the prophets of the Old Testament speaking of God enthroned in Heaven and of a King yet to come; the Gospel writers telling of the statements Jesus made about the Kingdom of God; and also the testimony from the Revelation to John of the Resurrected Christ, through which we are reminded that we are citizens of a Kingdom, and that our King is Jesus Christ.

Jesus has not been voted into power – and has not only power but also authority. His rule over us is for our good and the good of his Kingdom. He has absolute, final authority; and having led by example, is due our honour, respect and obedience, as subjects of the Kingdom. Furthermore, we look forward to the fullness of that Kingdom being experienced for ourselves and for all people (a theme to be enhanced during the Season of Advent).

### **Closing Prayer:**

Almighty God:  
from the beginning of time  
to the end of eternity,

you have chosen  
to use your power and majesty  
to love us,  
to redeem us,  
to shape us as your people.

King of Kings  
and Lord of Lords:  
you became weak  
so you could confront  
the strength of sin and death,  
confounding their ridicule  
with your resurrection.

Spirit of God,  
resting upon us:  
may your power enflame us with your peace;  
may your peace touch us with your grace;  
may your grace fill us with your hope;  
may your hope lead us into your Kingdom.

### **Eucharistic Preface**

The Lord be with you  
*And also with you*  
Lift up your hearts  
*We lift them to the Lord.*  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
*It is right to give our thanks and praise.*

It is indeed right to give you our thanks and praise, O God,  
for you are the One who was, and is, and is to come,  
and you reign over all from beginning to end.

You created the earth and its inhabitants,  
and chose gifted men and women to lead your people,  
exalting those who rule with justice and humility.

In faithfulness to the promises made through your prophets,  
you sent your child, Jesus Christ, into the world  
to testify to the truth and shepherd your people.  
Though he was accused of treason before Pilate  
and executed by his own nation,  
he was the first born from the dead,  
raised by your power  
to free us from sin and make us your holy people.

You gave him glory and dominion forever,  
and he rules over all  
with an authority that comes, not from this world,  
but from you, our God and our Rock.

Therefore with...

*[Nathan Nettleton]*

**Commission & Blessing**

Go out as faithful witnesses to the one who reigns forever.  
Look to Christ as your shepherd and your ruler,  
and listen for his voice.  
Clothe yourselves in righteousness  
and make every place a place to worship God.

And may God strengthen you;  
May Christ Jesus be the rising sun that lightens your days;  
May the Holy Spirit speak to you and through you  
With words of grace and peace.

Blessing...

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