



Sunday Reflection

Ordinary Time

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 21 November 2021

Christ the King

On this feast of Christ the King, we gather to "worship the king, all glorious above", in the words of a traditional hymn. But we also remember that the King of Heaven came among us as a human being, to teach us the true meaning of humanity.

Reflection for this week's Gospel teaching

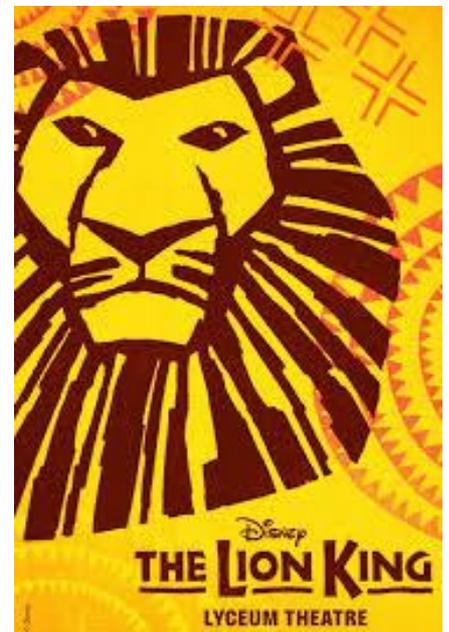
"My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over." John 18:36

An Illustration to set the scene

In the West End musical *The Lion King*, the young cub Simba starts off with a rather simplistic view of kingship.

As he sings, "**I just can't wait to be king**", Simba wants to be free to do everything he wants, and, in a cheeky pun, to be the "mane event".

He's looking forward to giving orders, not following them.



In these days of constitutional monarchies such as our British one, for example, such a view of kingship seems outdated.

But even in republics, some presidents around the world have absolute power.

And for centuries rulers were certainly expected to rule by giving orders – just as Simba clearly wanted to.

Looking at the teaching of the Gospel

In today's Gospel, Pilate was surprised that this prisoner was accused of wanting to be king.

There's sarcasm in his voice: **“Are you the King of the Jews?”**

The nearest to a king in that particular time and place was the Roman emperor, and even his regional representatives, such as Pilate himself, were surrounded by pomp and ceremony.

This commoner from Galilee (*not even Jerusalem*) hardly fitted the bill.

In the following chapter, the chief priests agree.

They cry out that they have no king but Caesar.

Yet some people really had seen Jesus as a king.

After his birth, wise men from the East came asking to see the child who was born king of the Jews.

And, during his ministry, the crowds wanted to make him king but he slipped away.

The Jewish people under Roman occupation longed to have their own king again.

Looking back into their history, they remembered the likes of David and Solomon: powerful, majestic.

Their scriptures promised another king, and many at the time were waiting excitedly for this Messiah, God's anointed one, more of the same.

So, despite his humble appearance, when Jesus entered Jerusalem ahead of his arrest, the crowds hailed him as the Son of David and even specifically as "the King of Israel".

But even those crowds turn against Jesus.

When Pilate later offers to release Jesus the people call instead for the release of Barabbas, variously described in the Gospels as a rebel or a bandit.

And as Jesus hangs on the cross, people mock him and object to the sign that Pilate has ordered to be erected in multiple languages, reading: "*Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews*".

None of them can understand the nature of this particular kingship – because, as Jesus explains to Pilate, his kingdom is not of this world. It transcends this world, even this life.

How can we reflect on the application to our lives?

Like traditional kings, the King of Heaven gave us some orders, commandments, but these were to help us be more human, more humane.

Jesus summed them up as to love God and our neighbours.

And on the eve of his execution, he said "**Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.**"

All Jesus asks of us today is to love others as he did – selflessly.

For, in doing so, we show our love for God.

Jesus came to teach the true meaning of kingship, ruling with justice and compassion.

Good rulers serve the best interests of their subjects, as Jesus would do on the cross – defeating our greatest enemies, sin and death.

But in coming to us as a human being, he also taught the true meaning of humanity.

Rather than physically fighting to defend him, his followers are called to show the same justice and compassion to others.

Unlikely as it seemed to Pilate, Christ is indeed king – not only of the Jews, but of everyone.

So can we, his subjects, follow his orders by showing love to others, helping those in need, and seeking to understand anyone different from us in any way?

In *The Lion King*, as Simba gradually learns the true meaning of kingship, another song stands out: *“Can you feel the love tonight?”*

The most famous version of it ends with these words: *“It’s enough to make kings and vagabonds believe the very best”*.

Rich or poor, can we feel God’s love today?

Then we can believe the very best – that Christ is indeed king, of a kingdom that will never end

“My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over.” *John 18:36*

Please share your response to this reflection to Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God’ spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

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