

## CHRIST THE KING 25 November, 2007

1. **The disciples experienced a great mystery** which was so momentous that it changed their lives. As time passed they needed to develop ideas and images—a theology—to explain their experience of Christ in his life, death resurrection and ascension.. To help christians from a Jewish background, they looked to interpret Jesus in the light of Old Testament prophecies. Hellenistic Judaism brought the reflections of Greek philosophy into the development of early theology. The readings for the Feast of Christ the King are part of this reflection and deepen our understanding.
2. **The prophets** looked forward to a time when there would come a king like David to restore peace in Jerusalem. Luke interprets Jesus as this king to the christians in Antioch, both Jews and Gentiles. The Jewish Zechariah's hymn of praise (p. 30 APBA) interprets Jesus as the long-expected Saviour. Luke declares Jesus as the truly righteous man, a king, through the words of the gentile centurions , the words of the criminal confirm his kingship. (Luke 23.33-43)
3. **1 Col. 11-20** may be part of an early baptismal hymn for it is a comprehensive creed about Christ, a creed which is a theological development from the narrative of Christ's life. The writer speaks of Christ's pre-existent state as an agent in creation and preservation (v.15-17), then his redeeming work—the incarnation (v.19), the cross (v. 20), his resurrection (v. 18) and his Church (v. 18). These acts of God have brought us into the kingdom, the realm of Christ, for as creator and redeemer he is the ruler of the universe. Christian hope continues to centre on the coming of Christ in glory to establish his reign of peace.
4. **We catch glimpses of the Kingdom** in acts of forgiveness and reconciliation, in unconditional love and compassionate acts, in self-sacrifice and humility. We long for the kingdom when we see hatred, war and strife, genocide, poverty and suffering, man's inhumanity to man. We know that humanity is falling short of what we have been created to be. Jesus came to us, truly human, one in whom the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. This man is the one we call King. This is the humanity which God has made us for and which will be fulfilled when Christ lives in us fully. We can call this Christ's reign.. We long for the time when the universe and all its people measure up to the standard of that perfect humanity.

## ALL SAINTS' DAY 4 November, 2007

1. **There are common misconceptions about 'saints'** - people who are really really good, people who live in heaven, good people from days of old, especially biblical and medieval times, and people who have been canonized by the Church because of a miracle in their name. The answer is more forthright although the language of Bible and prayer book might still be difficult. The saints are those knit together in the communion and fellowship of the Church, the body of Christ (Collect for All Saints), They are marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1.11-23). In other words the saints are all those who are baptised , all those who are members of the Church. We are saints.
2. **We are people of NOW and NOT YET.** NOW because we belong and enjoy the richness of our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. NOW because we are people who have Jesus as a pattern for living; and the Holy Spirit with us to strengthen and guide us; and the knowledge of the Father's love in all we do. NOW because we are called into ministry to live praising God and serving our fellow human beings. NOT YET because we know we are inheritors of the kingdom and that what we experience now is just a foretaste of what is to come. We have the 'pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people" (v. 14) . The writer prays that the saints at Ephesus might receive 'a spirit of wisdom and revelation' as they come to know Father through Jesus. We grow into our baptism, so to speak, for in it we are made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom (p. 79 APBA) yet we have a lifetime of revelation to fulfil the promises of Baptism. We grow in understanding , in deed, and in hope.
3. **Saints are people of hope.** The gospel (Luke 6.20-26) is a message of hope from Jesus, a message which the early Christians whom Luke wrote his gospel for needed to hear as they faced persecution. The saints may be hungry, sorrowful, and persecuted now, but the **time** will come when in the kingdom of God their woes will be turned to joy and they will enjoy the richness of life with God forever.
4. **May we live as people of hope,** ourselves being a sign now of the kingdom to come to the people around us.

## TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

11 November, 2007

1. Journalists are often ready with tricky questions to catch out politicians about policies. The Pharisees and the Sadducees filled that role for Jesus. The Sadducees, unlike the Pharisees, did not believe in life after death, so this is their question. Like the Pharisees' questions it was put to Jesus to trap him; but just as they used Jewish custom for their question, he used Jewish history for his answer. (Luke 20.27-40)
2. **Jesus shows that life must continue.** He reminds them of Moses who referred to the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob when God revealed himself in the bush. "Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive." His answer silenced them. This was the barbecue-stopper!
3. **Belief in resurrection is deeply imbued in us** through our creeds and liturgy. "We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come", (Nicene Creed) "I believe ...in the communion of saints (Apostles Creed) "with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name". (Thanksgiving Prayer). Older people may recall the phrases 'the church militant' and 'the church triumphant'.. We sing 'when the saints go marching in". It is not just Jesus' words which convince us. It is Jesus risen from the dead. His resurrection is the sign and promise of our resurrection to eternal life. The early christians found comfort and hope in Jesus' resurrection and so through the ages the saints have believed.
4. **What does such a belief mean for us** when many reject it?
  - It gives meaning to this life. We don't have to ask what the point of life is, as people do who see death as the end. People who believe in eternal life are people of hope. They don't say despairingly 'when you're dead you're dead'.
  - It enables us to get through pain and suffering, looking forward to a time when every tear will be wiped away. People with hope are better able to ride the roller-coaster of life's ups and downs without despair.
  - Death holds no fear, either for ourselves or for others we love. We know that we will always be held in God's love. Death is seen as a natural passage in life and a beginning of the next adventure. While Christians mourn as everyone else, they don't despair.
  - It gives us a glimpse of the eternal life and love of God, not limited by time. "A thousand ages in they sight are like an evening gone."
5. **"May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word"** (2 Thess. 2. 16

## TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

18 November, 2007

1. **Our television sets bring the horror of war** into our homes, but for most Australians it is still remote. It is hard for us to empathise with people who have known little except terror, invasion and displacement for generation after generation. Waves of destruction (weeping and cries of distress, dying infants, destruction of homes and vineyards, capture and exile (Isaiah 65.17-25) fell upon Israel. Luke's gospel was written following the persecution of the Church by Nero. He writes about things yet to come, in particular the end of the world. Luke deals with the historical crisis of his day, the sacking of Jerusalem by Roman forces. But the end of this historical time is not the end of time itself .
2. **Each generation will face crises** of terror and horror. In the last century we have seen Jews in the Holocaust, christians facing persecution in Uganda under Idid Amin, in Iraq, in Burma, in Russia and China, and ethnic wars and genocide in many places. There were more martyrs in the 20th century than in all the other centuries since Christ together. The C21 will be no different.
3. **The relevance of this writing today** is in the words of encouragement: *I will give you words and wisdom... by your endurance you will gain your souls* (Luke 21.9-15) . Trusting in the salvation of God and the promise to eternal life gives christians hope during times of struggle. *Behold God is my salvation: I will trust and will not be afraid* (Song of Isaiah p. 391 APBA). It is this hope which sustained the Jews in exile. The vision of the restoration of Jerusalem (Isaiah 65. 17-25) encouraged them to endure and persevere. Maintaining one's humanity while others are treating you as less than human is what we are called to do.
4. **Today the Church is threatened** by indifference and apathy, fundamentalism, division, failure to speak the gospel in a relevant way, declining numbers, Our society is worried about climate change, nuclear power, conservation of the earth's resources, ethnic conflict. Times have changed but the words of hope stay with us: trust and be not afraid, God will give us words and wisdom, we must endure and persevere and just live faithfully today until Christ has subjected all evil..
5. **Living faithfully** does not mean doing nothing; but seeking, within our powers to do what is righteous and just. It is hard for us in our small part of the world to seek to transform the face of the earth, but each of us in our own way is called to do our part in conservation, reconciliation, restoration and peace.