

Christ the King – Short Sermon (7–8 minutes)

St Mary's Cuddington

Colossians 1:11–20 | Luke 23:33–43

1. Introduction – A Humorous Story About Hierarchy

In parts of India, the Syrian Orthodox Church has a fascinating old custom: when a Metropolitan dies, he is buried *sitting* in his episcopal chair—symbolising that he will continue to hold his seat in heaven.

According to a well-loved story, a Metropolitan arrived at the gates of heaven. Jesus welcomed him warmly and praised his faithful service. But the Metropolitan noticed something odd: Jesus and St Peter stood up to greet every other person—clergy and lay alike—but they had not stood to greet *him*.

Slightly offended, he asked Jesus,
“Why did you not stand to welcome me?”

Jesus smiled and replied,
“Because Peter didn’t stand. Better ask him.”

So the Metropolitan turned to Peter, who answered with a twinkle in his eye:
“My dear Metropolitan... if I had stood up, by the time I sat down again, you might have taken my seat—you arrived with a chair of your own!”

This humorous story reveals a deep truth: in God’s kingdom, authority has nothing to do with position—it is about humility, service, and love.

And this is exactly the message of Christ the King.

2. When Kingship Goes Wrong

Human societies have long misunderstood kingship.

When Israel demanded a king “like the nations,” they were really asking for:

- hierarchy
- control
- power structures that exploited
- systems that looked impressive but did not reflect God’s heart

They forgot that God had already given them a calling—a vocation shaped by justice, compassion, and trust.

Even in Eden, the serpent tempted Adam and Eve with the ancient lie:

“You will be like gods.”

The lie that we lack something.

That we must seize power for ourselves.

And this temptation continues today.

We see leaders who rise through:

- polarisation
- division
- hatred
- lies
- war
- greed
- corruption

Leaders who rule by fear rather than serve in love.

Into this world steps a King utterly unlike any other.

3. Christ the King Revealed on a Cross (Luke 23:33–43)

If we wrote the story ourselves, Jesus would be crowned with gold.

Instead, Luke shows us a King:

- crowned with thorns,
- enthroned on a cross,
- surrounded by criminals, not courtiers.

His royal proclamation is a prayer:

“Father, forgive them.”

One criminal mocks Him:

“If you are a king, save yourself!”

But the other sees the truth:

a King whose authority is love.

“Jesus, remember me...”

And Jesus replies with royal mercy:

“Today you will be with me in paradise.”

The first person to recognise Christ the King is a dying man—not because Jesus exerts power, but because He extends grace.

4. Christ the King – Cosmic and Cruciform (Colossians 1:11–20)

Colossians lifts our eyes to a vast horizon:

- Christ is the image of the invisible God.
- All things were created through Him and for Him.

- In Him all things hold together.
- And He is the head of the Church.

Yet this cosmic King rules not through domination but reconciliation.
Not by taking life, but by giving His own.
He makes peace through the blood of the cross.

Christ the King is not the king of domination—
He is the King of transforming love.

5. Christ the King in a Troubled World – Chaplin and the Great Dictator

In *The Great Dictator*, Charlie Chaplin offers one of the most moving speeches of the 20th century:

“I don’t want to be an emperor...
We want to live by each other’s happiness, not each other’s misery...
The good earth is rich and can provide for everyone...
But we have lost the way.”

These words sound profoundly Christlike.

They echo Jesus’ words to Pilate:

“My kingdom is not from this world... If it were, my followers would be fighting.”

Here is a King who rejects domination, coercion, and violence.
A King whose rule is peace, justice, dignity, and shared life.

6. Pius XI and the Feast of Christ the King

Pope Pius XI established the Feast of Christ the King in 1925, just after World War I, because he believed only Christ’s kingship could bring true peace to a broken world.

He wrote that Christ is “*King of hearts*” because His love surpasses all knowledge.

Nearly a century later, the world remains filled with:

- wars started by leaders who refuse peace
- misinformation that divides communities
- systems that favour the powerful
- public life corrupted by greed and self-interest

Into such a world, Christ offers an alternative kingdom—
a kingdom of:

- shalom – peace that heals the whole person
- fairness and justice
- freedom and dignity

- life-affirming economy
- shared resources
- a table where all have a place

A kingdom not built by force, but by transformed hearts.

7. Kings and Queens: Our Shared Calling

We often talk about global leaders, but each of us is also a king or queen in the small realms entrusted to us:

- our homes
- our words
- our choices
- our influence
- our leadership

Every day we decide:

Will I use my influence for peace or for power?

For building walls or building bridges?

For self-protection or generosity?

Christ invites us not just to admire Him, but to reflect Him.

8. Christ the King and Our Calling in Advent

As we enter Advent, we remember that Christ's kingdom grows not by force but by people who respond to God's call.

Advent is a time to give, serve, and offer our gifts to God's work.

Here at St Mary's, many already give generously of their time, creativity, and resources. We are deeply grateful.

As we look toward the future, and as we work to become a financially sustainable church—free from ongoing deficits—we warmly invite others to join in this joyful mission.

If you feel called to serve, contribute, or help us reach the community, please step forward.

Your giving, your presence, your involvement helps St Mary's continue to be a blessing to this parish.

Christ's kingdom grows through hearts willing to serve.

9. Conclusion – A King Who Stoops to Lift Us Up

Christ the King turns everything upside down:

- His crown is compassion.
- His throne is a cross.
- His power is forgiveness.
- His glory is love.
- His authority brings freedom, not fear.

And He calls us to follow Him into a kingdom shaped by justice, mercy, peace, truth, and generosity.

As Chaplin said:

“You, the people, have the power... to make this life free and beautiful.”

And as St Peter reminds us:

“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood...
that you may proclaim His marvellous light.”

So we pray:

Lord, make us instruments of Your peace.
Shape us into leaders who serve,
disciples who love,
and people who reflect Your kingdom.
Amen.