

Against the love of power, we crown the Power of Love



In a way Christianity is all about the end-times. Partly because we Christians don't hide from the Big Truths and the reality of mortality, and the consequences of brokenness. And partly because we know that in all end-times are hidden new beginnings, new with the dawn.

So here we are, at the end of the year, on the Solemnity of Christ the King, bringing together all we have experienced with Jesus throughout the year; kneeling and gazed into the cradle, sharing with Mary in the angel's invitation to bear the Lord of Love into the world, receiving the ash cross of penitence, meeting the Lord in our wilderness. When we wept as Jesus bore our pain on the cross, but then sang Alleluias with the Lord of Life. When we received the cross again at Pentecost in shining oil of commission, and when we simply lived the everyday demands and blessings of life in the light of all of that love.

With the memory of last Advent's New Year Resolutions... Joyful, bumped and bruised, with triumphs to share and regrets to lay down....

....We celebrate today

Because our God is King.

God keeps his resolutions, always.

We have a God in whom we can place our trust. For God *is* Lord of all creation. And ... that means nothing else is. Not the storms of life, not the Caesars of our world... the forces of politics, illness and disaster, the pressures of a fear driven society. As S. Paul says, and as I will proclaim next week in this very chancel as I commend the soul of one of our brothers in Christ into his eternal mercy and love:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Love wins. The simple, world shattering, power of sheer Love. And that's who and what God is. Nothing else. Nothing more, and ... *nothing less*.

We need a God of Power, a God who can deliver on his promises. It is true that God is tender, loving, inclusive and intimate. And we mustn't forget that, and indeed it can take a lifetime to glimpse the tenderness of his love for us. But he is also still Powerful and Mighty. And we need that too.

Like a father who carries his child all the way through the wilderness, says the book of Deuteronomy; like the nursing mother, say the psalms; like the Shepherd King and the mother hen, says Jesus – parental love is perfected in God to all that it should be – tender, gentle, encouraging, and fierce to protect and help us grow.

The God who wears his crown, kneels at our feet. The Servant King – as it says in the hymn - whose hands flung stars into space, and became the hands that washed our feet, that hung on the cross, that commissioned us at the breakfast on the beach. That teach us the power of love.

The power that Jesus has, as the Victorious Lord, is the power of the Lamb who was slain. The Lord who is in the midst of our worst pain and brokenness and absorbs and transforms that violence with Love that is a life-giving power of truth that speaks and is active throughout the ages.

There are so many voices and powers in our world trying to gain victory with bombs, with violence, with oppression, with hate, fear and de-humanisation. Today's feast proclaims a different sort of power. As Christians this is the power we embrace. We replace the banners and trophies of the world with the sign of the Cross.

The power of non-violent protest, of tender love. Think of Martin Luther King, of Mthr Teresa, of Florence Nightingale, of William Wilberforce, and so many others, who have shared into our world the sort of love that changes the world around us. We lift high the Cross and stand firm under it, because it is a Cross of two sides – the cross of Love that bears our pain, and the cross of Love that defeats it, and leaves it empty.

Alongside a world that serves the love of power.
We, in Christ the King, set the Power of Love.....

I am sure that many of you are familiar with the Narnia stories – with Aslan, the Lion, who is not a tame lion. Who lets the children of Narnia play on his back, but whose breath can bring life, and whose roar can bring devastation to the powers of evil.

Aslan, who is, of course, Jesus our King, Lion of Judah, Lamb of God.

The simple truth is there in so many of the legends and deep and powerful stories we tell our children. Deep down, in our heart of hearts, we know that the only real power in the world is Love that serves, and it is that Love that in the end will win and the darkness cannot – as we shall proclaim in a few weeks' time – overcome it.

Jesus, King of Creation, stands in the bow of a boat and stills a wild raging storm with a gentle word.

Jesus, King of Creation, stands in sandals, with a towel round his waist, and to serve in love.

The Solemnity of Christ the King calls us to stand in this tension of power and of love, and to unite it; to find both in the person of Jesus, to place our trust there, and to respond to his invitation to be claimed by him, and to follow him.

Because Jesus says to us... I share my kingship as I share all that I am with you... the power of the Love of a crucified, resurrected God.... my royal power and freedom to heal and redeem.

When the Lord claims us at baptism, he shares that Kingly power with us. I often say at baptism that if we believe that God is King of the Universe, able to bring life, healing, creative goodness into the world; and if we believe that in baptism he adopts us as his children... that makes us princes, and princesses in his Kingdom. It really is true.

When we stand, as we do, in the pain of our own frailty, and the pain of all that life throws at us, and those around us, we stand in confidence. We stand in the knowledge that God shares that with us, and also shares with us his power to heal and transform, his power to find a way through to Easter Dawn. Given to us, and given to us to share with those around us.

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For if God is Lord, then nothing and no-one else is.

So let us stand in awe today in front of the Majesty of Christ. To feel that confidence spread through our veins. To live in joy, and in risk. To reject the creeping mists of fear, despair and negativism that chill our world, to resist those who use power to oppress and bully.

To stand in Jesus' Royal Power, in freedom to cast aside all that limits you and makes you afraid, and begin, always begin again...

We go forth to just keep on loving...
in the Name of the King of the Jews, nailed to the Cross,
in the Name of the Power of Love –
crucified, risen and ascended into heaven...

with whom we pray as sisters and brothers

Our Father... your kingdom come.