

CHRIST THE KING – 2021

Daniel 7:13-14

Rev 1:5-8

Jn 18:33-37

In one of AA Milne's poems from 'When we were young,' Christopher Robin reflects on kingship and says, "I wish I were a king. And then I could do anything." If only!

Today's reading from Daniel tells us that God has judged the Gentile kings and God's kingdom would replace them. In Daniel these kingdoms are portrayed as beasts while God's kingdom is portrayed as a man who represents all those who respond positively to God's rule. These are the Righteous who the Book of Revelation tells us offer spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God and offer their lives in self-surrender to his will. Jesus has washed away their sins and in this world it is the Church and its members who must make God's reign visible on earth.

The gospel reading describes another judgemental stand-off between Imperial secular power and the Kingdom of God. It took place in the Caesar's Judgement Hall in Jerusalem. On the one hand there was Pontius Pilate who represented Tiberius Augustus Caesar, human Roman emperor who claimed to be a god. On the other hand there was Jesus, God who became a man. Behind Pilate stood the whole might of the Roman Empire stretching back to the day a she wolf suckled the twins Romulus and Remus. Behind Jesus were a few women, a youth, and a handful of men who had gone into hiding. Yet it was the powerful one who was troubled by this encounter, not the powerless one. The man of power could not understand why this powerless man had raised up such a furore among the Jews. The powerless one stood silent knowing that he was clothed with the Truth.

Pilate's wife had told him to do nothing with this man Jesus but he had to do something. He tries his best to get even the slightest admission of guilt out of Jesus that would be enough to enable him to act and satisfy the screaming crowd. "Are you a king?" he asked. Pilate had no interest in Jewish babbling about invisible temples and claims to divinity, but he understood resistance to the Roman Empire. Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born and for this I have come into the world. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice."

In his panic and frustration Pilate asks, "What is truth?" In asking this he is admitting that truth is not absolute, but relative. It is whatever people want it to be. In such a world, might is right and a majority vote is the voice of heaven. Wealth, position or having the right connections offer immortal greatness. The State is supreme and demands the absolute unquestioned obedience reserved only to God.

In that Judgement Hall the big lies of secular thinking are exposed by the one who is Truth who quietly explains that his kingdom is not like those of this world. His kingdom is one in which mercy not might, makes things right. Worldly empires rise and fall while the crowds chant their slogans such as, "We have no king but Elvis," or "Woke is no joke."

Truth is the foundation of God's Rule. It is truth that sets us free. Truth is the person who reigned from a tree wearing a crown of thorns and bearing all the hatred and lust of the powermongers, the self-righteous haters and the wannabee failures. Truth is the one who was raised from the dead on the third day. He is the one who said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14:6).

In that Judgement Hall the might of pagan Imperial Rome and Christ the King of the Universe faced each other. What Jesus said on that occasion still stands, "I have come to bear witness to the Truth" (Jn 18:31). Pilate may not have known whether truth is relative or absolute but Jesus knew that he had come to bear witness to the God who is absolute Truth.

The Judgement Hall is not in Jerusalem, it is in our hearts. Which voice we listen to is a matter of life and death? Which one do you choose?

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