

As I stand here today without any robes on, you will know that I'm certainly not the most dedicated Anglican when it comes to following liturgical guidelines. However you will know that my faithfulness to the authority of God's Word cannot be brought into question. You may or may not have therefore noticed that the colours at the front of the church have moved from Green to White, signifying something special in the life of the church calendar. And that's because Sunday past was considered as the equivalent to New Year's Eve. We have reached the end of the Church year. Next week we will commence Advent which is the start of the Church year. And this week we recognize Christ's authority as King. Sunday was known as Christ the King Day.

So why is today important to us? What can we say about the Festival of Christ the King?

Well let's first think of the role of a King. In this country we understand better than other nations the role of the King. The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system of governance. In this past year we have said our goodbyes to our long reigning monarch, Queen Elizabeth, who was on the throne since 1952. Before her was her father, King George VI. And now we begin a new reign of our King, King Charles III. Then after him we will have King William and then King George.

I think we have all found it strange to now be singing God save our gracious King, but we will get used to it. And as always it brings up the debate about the importance of the monarch – do we need to have a king as its mainly a ceremonial function. But hundreds of years back, the King of England had a significant role to play in decision making, in justice, and leading his country to war.

And so what does all this tell us about ourselves, or about the Christ we celebrate as King on this day? You see as we come to the end of the church year, we are asked to reflect on where the authority of Christ is in our lives; is he our King? And I therefore can't help thinking that when it comes to our obedience to our king, when it comes to our willingness to show him our respect and honour, many of us end up making the same mistake with him that we make with other people. We rush ahead on a business as usual basis, rushing around beginning to think about all the presents we need to buy, and then before we know it we are sitting in Church on Christmas morning probably thinking more about whether we've got enough Brussel Sprouts than actually think to ourselves – wow, a King is born today, and like any King we should give him honour in our lives. And so I'm all up for a day in which the Anglican Church considers Christ as King, but shouldn't Christ be King every day?

Think of the crucifixion of Christ for a moment - that passage we read from Luke a few minutes ago. Just about everyone there, from the guards and the Pharisees, to the thief on the cross next to him, taunted Jesus, saying to him: "If you are the messiah, if you are the king, then save yourself - and save us."

It is pretty obvious from the Gospel story that none of these people recognised Jesus for who he was: And this, it seemed, meant to them that they could abuse him as they might abuse any convicted criminal. To them,

nothing special was going on. I believe that if those who acted this way at the foot of the cross could come back and stand before Christ today - as we can stand before him – they would say to him:

“Sorry Jesus, we beg you, If we had known then what we know now, we would have been on our knees. If we had known, we would have taken your part, we would have wept for you instead of jeering at you. You are our true King, and we’ve not seen it. We’ve been too caught up in our own agendas”

So here’s the question for each of us today. What does it mean to claim that Jesus is our King, our Lord. Should we not be acting differently? to show him our respect? and to strive to honour him and obey him and serve him at all times?

How humbling it is to know that our King didn’t come into this world in some majestic cloud and demand our obedience. He came as a Servant, and yet a King. He came to suffer, and yet to be the Saviour. He came without any sin, and yet he took all our sin on himself. That is the King we need to recognise every day from here on in.

Recall what the prophet Isaiah said about Jesus.

He had no form of majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him - and so it was; he was despised and rejected by others, a man of suffering and acquainted with grief.

While we prepare for the beginnings of the Christmas season, I think we miss out on seeing our King Jesus who comes in humility and love to us, and wants us to see him and not pass him by – not as a King with all the pomp and ceremony that we think of, but as a King who serves and wants us to follow his example. Our response to Jesus therefore must be seen in our everyday response to those in need. Jesus said that if we didn’t notice him in the lives of those in need, then we have no place in his Kingdom.

And we owe him our praise, our obedience, our honour and care,- for he is our King - and our Saviour. We owe him, not just at Sunday worship, but in each minute of each day as we meet him and go about our normal business. The truth is that none of us today can really say to him - if only I had known you were a King. For we do know - and we are called to show our respect and our devotion each and every day. If we haven’t truly considered him as King of your heart, then I beg you to do it today before it’s too late. And maybe if today your life doesn’t not demonstrate him as King, then why not consider coming along to Alpha in the New Year to think more about who Jesus is in your life.

Let me pray a prayer which allows you to invite JESUS as king into your life today.

Lord Jesus, today I recognise you as King over all things. Forgive me where I have placed many other things before you. I choose today to place you centre of my thoughts, my actions, and my speech. I ask your Holy Spirit to equip me to be a proclaimer of your Good News in all my dealings. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.