

Some thoughts for the Festival of Christ the King

(week before Advent) 2020

A Reading from the letter to the Ephesians

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

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Almighty ever-living God, it is your will to gather up all things
in your beloved one,
reigning in the universe
in the power that is love,
mercifully grant
that the whole of creation,
freed from slavery,
may serve and praise you
through Jesus Christ
who is alive with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

In the life of the Church, Advent is supposed to be time of waiting. But we are not quite in Advent are we - so I suppose we must be in a time when we are still waiting to wait - which feels like a very long way from anything actually happening.

The Church calls this kind of double-waiting the Kingdom season. After many weeks of looking back at the stories from Jesus' life, we are called in November to switch our

attention to a future hope - one which recognises the painful truths of this present time - war, suffering and death - and looks towards the fulfilment of God's Kingdom. The colour of the Church in this season is red - the colour of poppies, of blood, and of passion. This Sunday acts as a culmination of these thoughts as we choose to celebrate Christ as King, even amongst the suffering of the world. Our vestments turn to white and gold, and though we are still only at the point of waiting to wait, we defiantly wear robes of celebration, proclaiming that Christ's love was, and is, and is to come.

And in our lives, in this unusual year, we are waiting to wait too. And it is hard. It's the first year in a long time I haven't heard the liturgical purists complain about Christmas lights going up to early. This year, we are glad of the comfort and hope that the lights bring, as we wait to wait.

We are waiting to find out what kind of Christmas we might wait and hope for.

We are waiting to find out what kind of vaccine we might wait and hope for.

We are waiting to find out what kind of 2021 we might wait and hope for.

This year we have, perhaps, an unparalleled opportunity to practice waiting before God - praying, reading, reflecting, and looking for the signs of his Kingdom. The signs are all around us - in every act of compassion or patience, in every kind word spoken, every talent used to improve the lives of others. His kingdom is in the patient painstaking work of scientific research and hard working medics. It is in all those who work not only for themselves but for the betterment of society, and in all those who notice those who are suffering and do something about it. It is a kingdom that is often quiet and self sacrificing - and occasionally loud and radical and persistent in its love. It is a Kingdom of prayer and a Kingdom of action. The Kingdom is amongst us - even whilst we wait to wait for it.

In a world which is fractured and waiting for the light at the end of the tunnel, we need to know about this King who is not afraid to dwell in the darkness with us.

Advent is almost upon us. Next week we will sing "O Come O Come Emmanuel". The God we call on is one whose very name means "God is with us", and he is with us even now. Amen