

## Sermon 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> November 2007:

### Jesus is Our King:

#### Colossians 1:11-20:

In the year 742 one of the greatest of the medieval kings was born, King Charlemagne, He came to power in 768 after the death of his father and had sole rule over the Kingdom, and by 800ad was undisputed ruler of Western Europe. His realm covered what are now France, Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands. It also included half of present day Italy and Germany, part of Austria and the Spanish boarder country down to the Ebro River. By thus establishing a central government over Western Europe, Charlemagne restored much of the unity of the Old Roman Empire and paved the way for the development of modern Europe and the spread of Christianity throughout the region.

Like many of these old Kings many legends have grown around Charlemagne. However beyond these legends lies a biography worthy of these tales. To the medieval mind only King Arthur vied with Charlemagne as the finest example of what a Christian King could be. Kind, yet fiercely defensive of his family and empire, there is much to be admired for his exploits spawned both histories and romances, and like all good legends his story is firmly rooted in history.

Charlemagne's character was contradictory. In an age when the usual penalty for defeat was death, Charlemagne several times spared the lives of his defeated foes; yet in 782 at Verden after a Saxon uprising, 4500 Saxons met their maker. He compelled clergy and nobles to reform, but he divorced two of his four wives without cause. He forced Kings and princes to kneel at his feet, yet his mother and his two favorite wives often overruled him in his own household.

Charlemagne had a great faith in God and showed that through out his reign, with reforms in worship, education, making them available to all people. He read his Bible daily and is said that he requested that on his death he be buried with his crown on his head, his sword at his side and his bible on his knees.

When his grave was found that is how they found him with his crown, sword and his bible propped up and opened on his knees. This great king of old knew who was his king and gave him his allegiance.

So today when we hear of Kings and Queens or the word “Sovereign” what do we think of? Do we in Australia go immediately to Queen Elizabeth who is, at present, the constitutional head of our country, a figurehead without real power in our democratic society?

However when you look back through time and look at Kings and Queens who have ruled and held sovereignty – supreme rule - over their peoples, we see a different picture to that of modern times. For that is what sovereign rule means – to have supreme power – total authority over the daily lives of their people.

Today many countries live in democratic societies where we have elected representatives and a system which has blurred the picture of Kingship for us. Only those who live under a dictatorship may have a clearer view.

In 1 Samuel 8: 10 ff The Lord through Samuel warns the people of Israel what they were letting themselves in for by asking for an earthly King.

Kings and Queens of Old such as Charlemagne, King David, King Henry 8<sup>th</sup>, Queen Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup>, are shown by history to have had that total power which included the final judgment in law and could order the execution or pardon of a person. Also they had a responsibility to care for their people and to protect their realm. The subjects of these Kings would not only give their full allegiance to their King but also their trust in that the King would look after them and protect them. Unfortunately many Kings of old became despots and sought their own wealth at the expense of their people.

So when we call Christ our King which model do we look at to get a true picture of his Kingship, the modern view or the historical view?

To get this clear picture of Christ as our King we need to look at the historical, for the Kingdom of God is not a democracy, we don't have universal suffrage – the vote in heaven, it is a monarchy (Theocracy). For in the beginning God created the universe including Earth out of nothing, God is the source of all authority. God thus tells us – through his word and the Holy Spirit – what to do, not the other way around. We can request through prayer but not demand.

Before we gave our lives to Christ we were slaves to the powers of evil, but when we accepted Christ he delivered us from that dominion through his life, death and resurrection. So as Christians – followers of Christ – we are citizens and subjects of the Kingdom of God. Just as immigrants since the 1<sup>st</sup> Fleet in 1778 became Australians and were sworn in to that state, Jesus has sworn us into the citizenship of The Kingdom of God and as such calls us to obedience of the ways, rules and laws of his Kingdom. Also part of submitting to our King is that not only do we give him total allegiance we also give him our total trust and faith.

So because we are resident aliens our allegiance is to our King and the authority that we ultimately follow and answer to is our King of Heaven. A King whose ways seem opposite or upside down to the way's of the world.

If the world says – “hate our enemies” – our King says – “love your enemies”. If the world says – “the one who dies with the most toys wins” our King says – “lay up treasures in heaven” then our duty is to forsake the material to treasure the eternal.

People, Christ is our King and the sole governing authority over our lives. However Christ is different from other rulers. We have all heard the saying that in this world power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely and as history has shown us many of the Kings of old were corrupt for they oppressed their subjects by laying heavy burdens on them and making their lives a misery. These Kings also tended to distance themselves from their subjects and leave them powerless.

In contrast to many of the historical monarchs, Christ loves and cares for his subjects. The bible tells us that Christ's power is absolute; Matt 28:18 – “then Jesus came to them and said – all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’ – and one with Authority has power.

So Christ does not push us down but rather lifts us up. He frees people – those that let him and call on him – from oppression and takes the heavy burdens from them: Matt 11: 28-30 - <sup>28</sup>*“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”* Jesus is a King who empowers his people rather than depressing or denigrating them.

Therefore unlike earthly Kings, Christ's authority is made perfect in his servitude and his power is made manifest in his weakness. Also instead of keeping his distance from us, his subjects, Jesus became one of us and lived as one of us. He experienced pain and rejection as we do, and he died our death on the cross. Hence he paid the price for our rebellion.

I can understand rebellion for I am a bit of a rebel as I tend to do my own thing and then check to see if I have trodden on any toes in the process. Recently I did just that trod on some big toes and was corrected quickly. Jesus also understands our rebellion for we have been in rebellion of God and his kingdom from the beginning.

In his letters Paul clearly teaches us that Christ has paid for sin, our sin, that Christ has reconciled us to God, that Christ gives us the pattern and the power to grow spiritually. Christ is the exact likeness of God, and is Lord (King) over all creation.

Therefore we should crown him Lord (King) over our lives. Since Christ is the head of the body, his church, we should nurture our connection to him.

For as we read in Corinthians he – Christ – has pre-eminence in all things and that it is the will of the Father that he should have all power in Heaven and Earth, that he might be preferred above angels and the powers of heaven, and that in all affairs of the Kingdom of God among men he should have this pre-eminence – first place.

Also he is to have first place in the hearts of his people above the world and the flesh, and when we place Christ in the place in our lives we are complying with the Fathers will, that all men & women should honour the Son even as they honour the Father- John 5:23.

Therefore Christ is uniquely qualified to be our King, because he knows each one of us - you and me – intimately and knows what our needs are. He has lived as one of us and shared our hurts, pains, and disappointments. It is because Christ understands us so well and that he is a loving King that we are empowered by him to endure our trails and find forgiveness for our sins and that joy that only he can give, and to find reason to give thanks in the midst of these trails and tribulations. Life is tough but Christ our King understands this and that is why he is there for us ready to come to our aide at any time, in any place.

It is Christ and Christ alone who is the source of the great power that enables one to face life with that kind patience & joy. It is through Jesus Christ that our Heavenly Father has qualified us to share in the inheritance with the saints in heaven.

Also we live in this world but we are citizens of heaven, for Christ has transferred us from the dominion of darkness into the Kingdom of Light. He as our King has set us free from the bondage of this world's ways – immorality, debt, one up man ship, self-centeredness, lust, greed, anger, and brought us to a place of joy, peace, love, longsuffering, patience, and where all our needs, not our wants, will be met.

But who is Christ? As Paul in our reading from Colossians 1:15-20 writes “he is the images of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation”

Paul reminds the Colossians that they have every reason to be grateful for the great gift of faith which they have received & that they must show their gratitude to God who provided this gift for them before creation began through their acceptance of and submission to Jesus the Christ. This is true for us today for the same gift from God was made available to us from the beginning of time.

So Christ is our King, as Christ is the only begotten son of God, God in the flesh, light from light, true God for true God, the author of our salvation, who was there in the beginning, and the lamb of God who was sacrificed for the sins of the whole world including you and me.

As our King he is the one we answer to when we do wrong and who has the final say in judgment, he is the one who is our sole authority and he is the one who frees us and empowers us.

Also when we say that Christ is our King we are saying that our every thought and deed is governed by his way and teaching, that we are committed to his kingdom and are in total submission to him.

So where are you (and me) in this picture? Is Christ Jesus your King? Is he the source of life for you or me, and does he hold number one place in your or my life? Is he sovereign in your life? If you claim to be a Christian and that you follow his ways and teaching and yet do not love Christ as your King then you are in rebellion to him and your claims maybe false.

To say that you follow someone is to be subservient to their teaching, and their authority over you. Just as the people of old followed their Kings, if we claim to be Christians and that we walk in the light of Christ we need to follow our King totally.

So once again is Christ your King? If not why not? What are you still hanging onto that keeps you from submitting fully to him? Is it your pride – this to is an issue I have had to deal with, your wealth, your social status, your business, your family or is it just yourself? For if you do not submit to your Sovereign King you are really centered on yourself and your own desires.

Why not let go of these things and make him your King today and find forgiveness for your rebellion, and a joy and peace beyond all understanding and then take your place in his Kingdom.

If he is your King, great, then be strong. Strong in the land of strength that lets you face the trials of life with a calm assurance, because your King and protector is the image of the invisible God. Strong in the face of the world's demands and temptations because you answer to a higher authority, strong in the face of the darkness because you are a child of God and can draw on the power of eternal light and life.

Strong in the face of death because you have an eternal home and destination to go to. Strong because Christ is your King.

Charlemagne had made Christ his king so now it is your turn to do the same.

If you need help on your journey and to make the right choices today there will be a time of silence at the beginning of our prayer time for personal reflection, or if you need further help our ministers ordained and lay plus our pray teams will be only too eager to help you.

**In the name of Father, Son & Holy Spirit - AMEN:**