

SERMON DELIVERED AT HOLY GHOST ANGLICAN CHURCH
ON 23 NOVEMBER 2014

Today the Church celebrates the feast of Christ the King. The church has celebrated the kingship of Jesus since medieval times. But designating this last Sunday of the Church year was not done until fairly recently - in 1925 in fact - by Pope Pius XI. It entered into the Protestant Church during the nineteen-sixties as more and more Protestant churches began to use the Lectionary as a basis for proclaiming the Word of God each Sunday.

Why create this special celebration of the kingship of Jesus?

Quite simply because the church needed the image of Christ as King in the 1920s. None of you are old enough to remember Italy's Benito Mussolini...not such a great person. A rabble-rouser named Adolf Hitler had been out of jail for a year. His Nazi party was growing in popularity. The world was in the beginning throes of a great Depression.

So mankind was in great need of a king different from the kingship offered by earthly kings, or those who we set up as "kings." The world needed a true king to counter the kings and dictators of the world with their false values.

Listen as God speaks through the prophet Ezekiel in today's first reading. Did you really HEAR the care God wants to take of his people? "I will rescue those who are lost...I will free them...I will take care of the injured...I will strengthen the weak."

If you look around at the kings of today, and those we set up in our own minds as kings, you don't see too much of that going on. Often a lot of self-serving and publicity seeking. So why put your faith in the kings of today who cannot give what God will give?

But look at the picture of Jesus the King as Matthew describes him in today's gospel. This king was different. This king came as a servant. This king came feeding the poor. This king welcomed strangers, gave clothing to people who didn't have any, visited and healed and prayed for people when they were sick. This king did not condemn people because they were in prison, but visited them because they too can have hope and can be saved because they too are children of God.

And listen very carefully to what Matthew also says between the lines. Jesus is calling YOU and ME to do exactly the same things that he did in his kingly role. By your baptism, you are an "other Christ." You are the face of Christ. You share in the kingship of Christ. You are the hands of Christ. You are the only way the justice and love and care and

compassion of God comes to the world – to your country, to your komune, to your city, to your job, to your school, to your household.

How is that played out in real life? Well, let me tell you. The story is told that one time Mother Theresa was sitting in one of the gutters of Calcutta, holding an old homeless man. He was dirty and disheveled...and dying. She was holding him in her arms, wiping his face with her hands. Two well-dressed American businessmen happened by and saw Mother Theresa with the old man. One of them walked over to her and said, “I wouldn’t do that for a million dollars.” Mother Theresa looked up into his face, and with a twinkle in her eye replied, “Neither would I!”

It’s not about money. On that day in Calcutta, Christ as King was present right there where Mother Theresa sat, tending to that homeless, dying man.

Our God hides himself most completely in the faces and places of suffering. The awareness that our God is a hidden God who hides himself in suffering is in stark contrast to the way many believe religion is. How often do we hear that rhetoric where god reveals himself only in the beauty of the sunset, the birth of babies, and in the bounty of nature. But our God is the only God in the whole wide world who also hides himself under the faces and places of suffering.

How will things end for you and I? I do know that Jesus waits at the end of my story, that he will see me, and know me, and that if I have done what he taught me, he will claim me as his own.

Carry the message that **Jesus** is your King, and let him rule your heart and your actions every moment of every day for the rest of your life.