

So now we know. The Coronation of our King will be on May 6<sup>th</sup> 2023- celebrated with an extra public holiday on May 8<sup>th</sup>- hurrah! Whether our new King's coronation will be trimmed down or in full ceremonial splendour we shall have to wait and see.

**Christ the King**, of course, had no coronation, no public holiday in his honour. His kingship was confirmed not in the heart of the city, but beyond the city walls, on a cross. The instrument of torture and humiliation of revenge and abandonment is his throne of glory- his kingliness a wracked naked body, the only jewels but a crown of thorns. **Christ the King**.

As far as I'm aware, the Anglican Communion has only one diocese of Christ the King- it is in South

Africa, on the southern edge of Johannesburg, its area covers Sharpeville and Soweto, places of appalling violence and oppression in the apartheid era and still today places of grinding poverty, of outsiders, migrants and seasonal workers desperate to work and live. The little people, the left behind people.

This last year, all our Gospel readings at the Sunday eucharist have been from Luke's Gospel. And we are reminded that Luke's vision of Christ the King has its focus in the cross- an upside down view of kingship which, as another has written, is summed up as 'Jesus reigns only from a tree'. But this is the heart of Luke's understanding of Good News, as is the concern for the little people, the left-behind. There can be no sense of triumphalism about this

kingship, no, it is firmly rooted in the cross- in costly self giving, total giving, outpouring of love, emptying of self.

Just as that Diocese of Christ the king in Soweto proclaims the rootedness of the cross, telling of the love of God, the rootedness of the church in that place and every place must also be in the cross, in order to proclaim the total self offering of love, for all, no exceptions, no one excluded, not the foreigner, the poor, the sick, the marginalised, the forgotten . And so it must be for us too. The rootedness of Christ's Kingship in this place – is here, right now, in this eucharist, in our receiving of the crucified body and spilt blood of Christ- into our hands, on our lips, into our selves. It is about our subsequent self-offering of ourselves in love,

imitating that love of Christ our King- for all. No one excluded- irrespective of economic power, social status, ethnic origin or sexual orientation. Does this parish- on the ground in Chelsea, like the diocese of Christ the king Soweto, like the cross of Christ outside the city walls of Jerusalem show this to the world?

No ifs and buts- this is what celebrating the kingship of Christ means.

Ironically, Luke's gospel today does have ifs. In the Gospel account we've just heard- on this last Sunday of the Church's year, culminating in the Cross of Christ our King, Luke, fascinatingly uses two 'ifs'- not because he doubts the message of the cross, not because he pines for a story where things might have culminated differently, no. His

use of the 'ifs', relates , in typical Lucan style to the paradox of Christ's kingship and those who truly understand and accept it.

First Luke has '**the leaders of the people**' say 'Let him save himself, **if** he is the Messiah, his chosen one'. And then he has the soldiers, the representatives of the Roman occupying power say '**If** you are the king of the Jews, save yourself'. The contempt is palpable- the contempt of the powerful, the established, the movers and shakers.

On the other hand, the little people, the left behind people, those who seem to count for little or for nothing, watch and weep and turn away, broken-hearted. This king does not avoid the cross, as he hangs next to the thieves, nor does he promise those who walk with him, special exemption from

self-sacrifice, but rather, he promises that it is only through this topsy-turvy notion of kingship, true peace, true justice, true hope can be found.

And would that be obvious for any visitor to our parish, any participant in our worship, or teaching, or service in this parish. Is it what our individual lives reveal? For Christ the King reigns in precisely those places where justice, love, righteousness, inclusion, hospitality, forgiveness and reconciliation are to be found. But is that in the Church of England, is that here in this parish Is that in each of us?