

John 18: 33 – 37

'Christ the King and truth'

Introduction ...

A few weeks ago, I read a book by Philippa Gregory called "The Queen's Fool". It was set in Tudor England – as with some of her other books such as "The Other Boleyn Girl". This book "The Queen's Fool" charted the relationship of and intrigue between the two step-sisters who each became Queens of England – Mary and Elizabeth.

One of the things that struck me was the assumption of the times that a monarch had the absolute say on what went on in the country – and that could only be changed by an army coup.

Their lives were 15 or 16 centuries after the earth life of Jesus – so how much more was this true in the time of Jesus – bear this in mind when thinking about the reading from the Gospel that we heard.

Morning – this is the context of the meeting between Pilate and Jesus in today's gospel reading ...

Evening – this is context of tonight's gospel reading when the crowd wanted to make Jesus "King" ...

On this Sunday of Christ the King ... the readings chosen are meant to make us think – and think hard. **Morning – Jesus at a point of humiliation and basically 'a dead man walking' – before Pilate, and evening – running away from the crowd attempting to make him King.**

Perhaps these are not what we would have expected – and that's important in itself.

Kingship ...

Jesus (**in the morning's reading**) was asked by Pilate if he was a King – if so he was clearly a rival to Caesar. Jesus answered that his kingdom was not of this world.

But, as Tom Wright points out in his commentary:

"When Jesus says 'My kingdom is not of this world', he's not implying that his kingdom has nothing to do with this world. The saying is not about the Kingdom's location but about its character. This Kingdom will not advance and conquer by violence. It will come on earth as in heaven, because it is about truth. Pilate struggles with this ... Perhaps he cannot imagine how there can be a Kingdom which is not kept in place by violence."

But **we** must keep this in view – especially in our times which have been described as a 'post-truth' era. Politicians can make promises in election campaigns – yet perhaps we no longer believe that any will necessarily be kept.

But we can respond differently in terms of the way we live our lives.

In John 14: 6 we read of Jesus saying: "I am the way, the truth and the life".

If Jesus came to testify to the truth, if he **is** the truth, if he is the **king** of truth, then what do we, his subjects, owe our king? What does loyalty to truth look like?

Our response is to focus on the truth that Jesus embodies what it means to be truly human and what it means to live life to the full. Jesus is focussed on love – love of his Father God and love of those around him. He does not view the **PTO**

way to be a true King as bolstering his own power – rather he empties himself in service. He sticks to the truth of this love – even when “inconvenient”.

Can we find ways of telling this story in our ‘post-truth’ context?

As we move towards Advent ... as we move towards a Parliamentary election in this constituency – can we have conversations about truth ... can we point to the example of Jesus and the strength he offers us to follow him?

Here’s a poem that might help:

A Poem for the Feast of Christ the King

**See how this infant boy
lifted himself down
into his humble crèche
and laid his tender glove of skin
against splintered wood –
found refuge in a rack
of straw – home
that chilly dawn,
in sweetest silage,
those shriven stalks.**

**This outcast king lifted
himself high upon his savage cross,
extended the regal banner
of his bones, draping himself
upon his throne – his battered feet,
his wounded hands not fastened
there by nails but sewn
by the strictest thorn of love.**

Pamela Cranston c 2019. Pamela Cranston, Searching for Nova Albion, (Wipf & Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR), 2019,p.86