

Jeremiah 23: 1-6

Benedictus or Song of Zechariah

1 Colossians 1: 11-20

Luke 23:33-43

*These sermon notes were prepared before the sermon was delivered and so do not transcribe the actual sermon word for word*

Today we celebrate the feast of “Christ the King”. What does that mean for us today, and in what context do we hear the readings chosen for today?

*[for those reading perhaps an opportunity here to pause for a moment and consider]*

Today is the last day of the Church year, and so we come to an ending, and as with all endings we become open to new beginnings.

Not only do we complete the church year, we also come to the end of the three year liturgical cycle which began on the first Sunday of Advent in 2010.

The three year liturgical cycle is the basis for the lectionary which provides us with the various dates/feats that make up our year, and also defines the readings for every day throughout the three year cycle; the readings for morning and evening prayer as well as the Sunday church readings.

The gospel readings in the first year (Year A) are taken from the Gospel of Matthew, those in the second year (or Year B) from the Gospel of Mark, and in the third year (or Year C) come from the Gospel of Luke. Portions of the Gospel of John are read during Easter and also during Advent, Christmas, and Lent wherever appropriate.

Over the three year cycle we therefore follow a course charted, or guided, by the readings and festivals that echo for us the life and revelation of Christ in (and to) the world.

Next Sunday, having completed today the third year (year C) in the cycle, we will start at the beginning of a new year with the first Sunday of Advent, and we begin a new three year cycle with the readings taken from the lectionary for year A in the cycle.

So this coming week, the week ahead, is an auspicious week in which we might heed the call of the London Underground prophets to ‘mind the gap’.

We have an opportunity to put our mind into contemplating the gap between the year that has just ended and the year that is about to begin.

Are you able to identify the movement, the inner movement, that you encountered and experienced last year?

Did your journey last year, as Paul says, make you “*strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power*”?

Did last year give you opportunities, like Jeremiah foresaw, opportunities for you to be “*be fruitful and multiply*”?

Did you encounter ‘Christ the King’ and come to *the place that is called The Skull*, [where] *they crucified Jesus*”?

If we had a Leunig cartoon of the liturgical cycle, we might well see a picture of a pew on two wheels, a bicycle with a pew saddle. The gospels however are perhaps more in keeping with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr Who, for they provide us with a ‘tardis’ that can take us beyond our imagination.

In the coming week of ‘mind the gap’ it is a good time for us to look back and seek the signs of our becoming.

What is our orientation?

What signs illuminate our direction?

Are we closer to the realisation of the reign of ‘Christ the King’?

It is also a week for us to contemplate the new year that we will begin next Sunday.

With what resolutions will we begin our new year? What desires will drive us into tomorrow and what fears will hold us back.

What changes do we contemplate, initiate and create so that the year ahead moves us forward toward life in Christ, rather than repeating the cycle of previous years?

Jeremiah, in the first reading, cautions the shepherds and speaks of the responsibility that they have to the flock, the people of God.

Everyone, each of us, is both shepherd and sheep and so need to listen carefully to Jeremiah’s caution.

Even more than that, with our eyes already turned toward Christmas, we might also be mindful that the shepherds are the first to bear witness to the birth of Christmas, for they are the ones directly addressed by the angels.

They are the ones who come before the kings arrive; they know of the Divine birth and it turns them aside from all that occupies their day-to-day activities.

Remember, we are both shepherd and sheep.

Paul, through the second reading, addresses us more directly as those “*enabled... to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.*”

Paul speaks of a Christ birthed beyond the Christmas manger and birthed as “*the firstborn of all creation*”.

And according to that same reading, we are reconciled, brought into integrity, with that very same place.

Will we therefore be able to start a new year unbounded by the Christmas manger, unbounded by the relentless ticking of time; and find our reality that is forever one with “*the firstborn of all creation*”?

Today's gospel is a stunning choice; as we celebrate 'Christ the king' we are given an account of Christ's death.

I have spoken before of a retired elderly gentleman I met in a coffee shop in Nepal; we've met frequently on my visits to Kathmandu and have exchanged worldviews; we have shared our own gospel insights together.

His insight into the future of Nepal he summed up by saying "the king is dead, now we are the king".

He was speaking of a profound movement that Nepal desperately needs to understand, and I though we need to understand the very same.

Some in the Church await a second-coming; they are waiting for Christ to come again and sort everything out. Many cafes in Fremantle are regularly filled with people who so readily describe what the king ought to do (or in our case the government)

Today as we celebrate the kingship of Christ we should also acknowledge the place of the skull. We should acknowledge the dying of Christ that is our very enabling.

What is revealed in (and through) Christ the King, is that which we are empowered to make manifest.

The feast of Christ the King is our feast, for it is we who are the Body of Christ.

And we, who are both shepherd and sheep, bear witness to the Divine birth.

It is we, together, who will begin a new year so full of promise and potential