

## **PHILIPPIANS 2 VERSES 5 – 11**

<sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mind-set as Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup> who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

## **JEREMIAH 23 VERSES 1 – 6**

‘Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!’ declares the LORD. <sup>2</sup> Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: ‘Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done,’ declares the LORD. <sup>3</sup> ‘I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. <sup>4</sup> I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing,’ declares the LORD. <sup>5</sup> ‘The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. <sup>6</sup> In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Saviour.’

## **COLOSSIANS 1 VERSES 9 – 20**

<sup>9</sup> For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, <sup>10</sup> so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, <sup>11</sup> being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, <sup>12</sup> and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. <sup>13</sup> For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

<sup>15</sup> The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup> For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. <sup>19</sup> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, <sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

# “HE’S MY KING”

## BIBLE READINGS:

*Jeremiah 23 verses 1 – 6*

*Colossians 1 verses 9 – 20*

Sometimes we load up other people with our burdens and pains, we pour out all our complaints and troubles, only to discover later on that the person is dealing with their own emotional burden, a burden far heavier than our own. Sometimes we ask someone to do this or that thing without considering their work load. We just assume that the other person is, or should be, willing to assist us, only to discover later on that they have just put in a long day at work, or that a family member has taken ill.

Other times we may, in good humour, tease someone about something, thinking that we know them well enough to have a bit of fun with them, only to discover later on that he or she is very sensitive about the very thing we thought was safe to tease them about. Then we realize that we have blown it - that we have acted inappropriately, and we seek out the person concerned and in almost every case we say something like: “if I had known, I would not have asked you that / not have said that or not have bothered you.” If only I had known.

Today is traditionally the last Sunday of the church year, because next week we enter Advent again. The Church lectionary, a system of readings to help the church to focus on God’s Word, sets aside this Sunday to being “Christ the King” Sunday. It was introduced by Pope Pius XI in 1925 to enable the church to focus on the rule of Christ as King. This was at a time when Mussolini, and Hitler were growing in popularity in a time of Depression and uncertainty, and using this to consolidate their power and authority – and earlier this month – we remember just where that led.

On this day, we are encouraged to remember that Jesus, when all is said and done, is our King, and I can't help thinking that when it comes to our obedience to our king, when it comes to our willingness to show him our respect and honour, many of us end up making the same mistake with him that we make with other people: we blunder ahead on a business as usual basis, being casual, abrupt, and insensitive until, all of sudden it seems, we realize that something special is going on.

Shouldn't we be caring and loving and respectful all the time? Shouldn't we always pay attention - before we say or do something, to where the person is at - to who the person is - to what the situation is? Shouldn't we honour our Lord and our King all the time, and not just at special times like Sunday morning?

In the act of sharing bread and wine in the Communion Service, we remember Christ’s sacrifice at Calvary, and Luke’s account of Jesus on the Cross when everyone from the guards and the Pharisees, to the thief on the cross next to him, taunted Jesus. saying to him: "If you are the messiah, if you are the king, then save yourself - and save us." It is pretty obvious from the gospel story that none of these people recognized Jesus for who he was: To them, it seemed, this meant that they could abuse him as they might abuse any convicted criminal. To them, nothing special was going on, it was business as usual, business without thinking, business without considering what it was that God would want out of them whether or not this man on the cross was the Messiah, or simply a misguided fool.

I believe that if those who acted this way at the foot of the cross could come back and stand before Christ today, as we can stand before him, they would say to him: “Sorry Jesus, If I had known I would have gone easier on you, if I had known I would have taken your part like the other thief took your part, I would have wept for you instead of jeering at you.”

What does it mean to claim that Jesus is our Messiah, our King, our Lord. If it does not mean that we are to act differently to show him our respect and to strive to honour him and obey him and

serve him at all times and never more so - so some would say - than when he is actually here with us? But what happens when we fail to recognize that our God and our King is actually here among us? What happens when the King is not sitting on his throne, or announcing his presence among us with trumpets and waving flags?

Recall what the prophet Isaiah said about Christ, about our God and King? **“He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him” and so it was “he was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering and familiar with suffering”.** (Isaiah 53 verse 3). If only I had known.

*The story is told about a Guru who was mediating in his Mountain cave. When he opened his eyes he discovered an unexpected visitor sitting before him - the abbot of a well known monastery. "What is it you seek", asked the Guru? The abbot recounted a tale of woe. At one time his monastery had been famous throughout the western world. It's cells were filled with young aspirants and its church had resounded to the chant of its monks. But hard times had come on the monastery. People no longer flocked there to nourish their spirits, the aspirants had dried up, and the church was almost silent. There were only a handful of monks left and these went about their duties with heavy hearts. Now this is what the abbot wanted to know - "Is it because of some sin of ours that the monastery has been reduced to this state?"*

*"Yes", replied the Guru, "a sin of ignorance."*

*"And what might that sin be?"*

*"One of your number is the Messiah in disguise and you are ignorant of this", replied the Guru - and having said so he closed his eyes and returned to his meditation.*

*Throughout the long journey back to his monastery the abbot's heart beat fast as he thought that the Messiah - the Messiah himself - had returned to earth and was right there in his monastery. How was it that he had failed to recognize him? Who could it be? Brother Cook? Brother Sacristan? Brother Treasurer? Brother Prior? No, not him; sadly he had too many defects. But then, the Guru had said he was in disguise. Could those defects be part of his disguise? Come to think of it, everyone in the monastery had defects and one of them had to be Messiah. Back in the monastery the abbot assembled all the monks and told them what he had discovered. They looked at one another in disbelief. The Messiah? Here? Incredible. But he was supposed to be here in disguise. So, maybe. What if it were so and so? Or the other one over there? One thing was certain. If the Messiah was there in disguise, it was not likely that they would recognize him. So they took to treating everyone with special respect and consideration. "You never know," they said to themselves when they dealt with one another, "maybe this is the one." The result was that the atmosphere of the monastery became vibrant with joy. Soon dozens of aspirants were seeking admission to the order and once again the church echoed with the holy and joyful chant of monks who were aglow with the spirit of love.*

Paul describes **“the kingdom of the Son [God] loves” as a “kingdom of light” (Colossians 1 verses 12, 13)** and his emphasis is on God's action in allowing us entry. He has qualified us, when we had no hope of qualifying ourselves; he has rescued us from a pit that we could not possibly climb out of, and he has “brought” us into his kingdom – like an asylum seeker or refugee entering a new land and we live under his authority, He has set us free from the past with all of our wrongdoings forgiven, we certainly have every incentive to “joyfully give thanks to the Father”. Jesus is “The Lord our Righteousness” – a king who reigns and brings us salvation. Our great assurance is that he has already come amongst us and His spirit is with us.

Jesus, our Messiah, our king, is here today somewhere in our midst, somewhere in our community, somewhere in our homes. He has no form of majesty about him that we should look at look at him, nothing about his appearance that we desire him, but he is here, and we owe him. He is our King, and our Saviour. We owe him our praise, our obedience, our special honour and care, not just in our times of prayer - when we address him upon his throne, but in each minute of each day as we meet him as we go about our normal business. None of us can really say to him, if only I had known. For we do know, and we are called to show Him our respect and our devotion each and every day.