**CHRIST THE KING**

In the Tuesday night bible Study, we’ve been looking at what we might call the “Big Picture” of the work of God in human history. This week, interestingly, our topic was God’s king. The study looked at how God has been at work in human history since The Fall, moving towards that time when finally the Messiah would come, who would be God’s perfect King.

These days we have little concept of what it means to live under a true monarchy. In the West, our experience of national leadership is of presidents, prime ministers and figureheads – all of which are far removed from the concept of the divine king that God revealed in the Scriptures.

I’m conscious that there are a number of us in our church family this morning who are suffering or grieving and perhaps finding life in God’s kingdom more of a trial than a joy right now. So let’s look at God’s concept of **Christ the King**, and see how that understanding might help us as we struggle to live in this kingdom that is not yet perfect.

Way back in Deuteronomy, God spelled out the characteristics that Israel should have in her king.

“When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us,"

be sure to appoint over you the king the LORD your God chooses. He must be from among your own brothers. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not a brother Israelite.

The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the LORD has told you, "You are not to go back that way again."

He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.

When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites.

It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel. ”

These verses could be summarised by saying that the king of God’s choosing would be someone who could resist the temptations of money, sex and power, and who would be single minded in his devotion to God.

Saul was chosen to be Israel’s first king, who, though he started well, gave into the allure of wealth and power, and was ultimately rejected by God.

While Saul was sliding down the slippery slope towards his demise, the young shepherd boy David was anointed by Samuel the prophet, and when Saul died, took his place as King of Israel. What was it about David that made him God’s choice? Paul had this to say in Acts 13:22

After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'

There it is again – that characteristic that God seeks in a king. God looks for someone who is single minded in his devotion to him; someone who does what God wants him to do.

Of course David was human, like the rest of us, and we know that David sinned greatly. He had an affair with his neighbour’s wife, got her pregnant, and then had her husband killed. Unlike Saul, David recognised his sin and repented, and once again walked with God.

After David, his son Solomon succeeded him. Solomon, like Saul, began well, and was a wise and godly leader. However, Solomon ended up marrying foreign wives, and began worshipping their gods. His reign ended in judgement.

A succession of kings followed Solomon, most of whom were weak or corrupt. It seemed that the old adage was true – “Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

But God had a plan. He would send his own Son. He would be the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and would save his people from their sins. In Isaiah 9:6-7, we find this familiar passage:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

Finally, in Jesus, we have the perfect King. This passage alone could keep us busy for weeks, but let’s just look at some key thoughts which remind us of just who we serve.

**Christ the King is PRESENT**

“For to US a child is born, to US a son is given.” This is the essence of the Incarnation – God with us. God is no longer “out there somewhere.” He has come among us. In the person of the Holy Spirit, Christ the King lives within each believer. He is closer to us than our own breath. And he is with us forever.

When we face dark times, trials, grief and loss – Christ the King is with us. Jesus reiterated those words as he was taken up to heaven, “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Jesus never leaves us – not for a moment. During those times when everything seems too hard, try stopping for a moment, closing your eyes, and imagining his promised presence right beside you. Visualising is a powerful tool in prayer.

**Christ the King is POWERFUL.**

We’re told he will reign on David’s throne. To reign means to possess or exercise sovereign power. This means there is nothing outside of Christ’s control or influence. He is the Mighty God.

Sometimes, though, when things start to unravel in our lives, we cry out to him as David did. I love the Message translation of psalm 74:11 – it’s so real. David cries out in frustration, “Why don't you do something? How long are you going to sit there with your hands folded in your lap?” David was secure enough in his relationship with God to be able to be completely honest with him. He was able to express his pain and his doubt and his frustration and he knew that God would not condemn him for it.

In the psalms, David doesn’t just unload, though. If we read on in that same psalm, we also see David expressing his confidence in God. He goes on to say,

But you have been our king from the beginning, O God; you have saved us many times. With your mighty strength you divided the sea and smashed the heads of the sea monsters; you crushed the heads of the monster Leviathan and fed his body to desert animals. You made springs and fountains flow; you dried up large rivers. You created the day and the night; you set the sun and the moon in their places; you set the limits of the earth; you made summer and winter.

Throughout the psalms, whenever David poured out his heart to God, he also reminded himself of God’s power and greatness and the mighty things he had seen God do.

I remember my spiritual director giving me this same advice once. I was feeling pretty low at the time, and for a time had lost sight of God’s love and goodness. I went to see her feeling that God was pretty distant. She suggested that I recall to mind those times in my walk with God when he’d answered prayer, or intervened in amazing ways, or revealed himself to me. It helped remind me that God wasn’t as far away as I felt he was and I found it a really encouraging thing to do.

**Christ the King is our PARENT**

“…he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

God has taught me a lot about himself through allowing me to be a parent. Anyone who has had children will understand how fierce and protective parental love can be. As a parent, all you want is the best for your children. You want to see them healthy, successful, happy and blessed.

You find you need to correct them and discipline them at times, and you hope that they learn from it. Sometimes they make choices that aren’t good choices, and you suffer with them as they learn through the hard knocks of life. In a healthy family, parents love their children unconditionally.

If we as imperfect, earthly parents can love our children like that, how much more does God love us?

Christ the King is a perfect parent. He is a Wonderful Counsellor. In dark times and in good times, we can come to him in prayer, and find that he counsels and guides us. He does this through his Word, through his people, and through the whisper of his Spirit in our hearts.

He is the Mighty God. Our Dad is bigger than all the other Dads. There is nothing too hard for him and no situation that will separate us from him.

He is the Everlasting Father. There is nothing that we can say or do that will make God love us less. (Someone wrote a great song along those lines) He is our Father forever.

And he is the Prince of Peace. He has removed our sin and imperfection from us as far as the east is from the west. He has made us white as snow. He has reunited us with himself through his death and resurrection. We are his forever.

If we’ve come to church today carrying a heavy load, then don’t leave without handing it over to **Christ our King**. He is PRESENT with us to the end of time, he is POWERFUL in the face of all circumstances, and he a PARENT who loves us unconditionally.

Let’s pray.