

Homily: Christ the King (Year B) 2021

On Monday I spent some time with our Year 5 class in school, talking about the Kingdom of God. As always, they were filled with great ideas and lots of insights. Very early on, one boy in the class suggested that we could call God's kingdom "the Kingdom of kingdoms", which seems appropriate, given that Jesus is the King of kings. We began to think together about what God's kingdom really is, and the course of that conversation itself can teach us a lot.

I asked them, "What is a kingdom?" Almost immediately, one girl said, "It's where the king reigns." "So where is God's kingdom?" "Heaven", the class agreed. They are right, of course. Jesus Himself says in today's Gospel: "My kingdom is not of this world". In the first and second readings, we hear of Jesus, the Son of Man, "riding on the clouds", being given an eternal sovereignty that can never pass away. If it is eternal, it must be of heaven, because this world is finite. And whilst we can't imagine heaven, we do know that in heaven, everything is perfect: there is no suffering, no sadness, no grief; there is only light, life and joy. This is the reign of God in its fulness: God is a King who desires only our good, and wherever His reign is perfect, everything in life is perfect.

But then one of the class put his hand up and said, "But doesn't God also reign on earth?" That is also true, of course: as we celebrate today, Jesus is the King of the entire universe: everything is subject to His rule. All of creation was made through Him and for Him; all the laws of nature were written by Him. His Kingdom, which is seen in its fulness in heaven, is also present here on earth. But not perfectly, because in this world, Jesus has left a part of creation that is not directly under His rule: the human heart. Of all beings in this universe, we alone – human beings – can choose whether or not the Lord will reign over us. We can decide whether to obey His will or to follow the dictates of our own hearts: He has given us this freedom.

So for us, the Kingdom of God is not something which is imposed, but offered. Jesus came into our world, bringing the Kingdom, the reign of God, with Him. So He tells Pilate: "Yes, I am a King. I was born for this, I came into the world for this." He comes to plant the seeds of God's Kingdom on earth, bringing with Him the happiness and joy of heaven, because heaven *is* the Kingdom of God. Wherever God truly reigns, a little piece of heaven is present.

Jesus says today that those who are on the side of truth listen to His voice. In recent years many people have stopped believing in truth. That might sound like an odd thing to say, but perhaps you've noticed it. Sometimes you hear phrases like, "That's *your* truth" or "This is *my* truth", as though we can all have our own versions of truth. It means nothing; it is, quite literally, none-sense. We can all have opinions, of course, but there is only one truth. Jesus wants us to hear the truth, which He proclaims, so that we can be free. Whenever we do not believe Him, whenever we doubt the truth that He teaches, He does not reign in us. He can only be our King if we trust Him. We need faith.

In the Our Father, Jesus taught us to pray: “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” We pray that the Kingdom may grow ever more on earth, so that earth may become more like heaven, gradually being freed from all forms of sin and the suffering it causes, as God reigns more and more. Perhaps we don’t pray this prayer fervently enough.

So let’s think about what it means for God’s kingdom to grow. It can happen in two ways. One is for more and more people to come to know Him – this happens as we share our faith with others, and as each new generation of Christians enters into the family of God. The other is that the Kingdom grows in those who are already the followers of Jesus: in other words, you and me. If I become more faithful, if I learn to trust Jesus more and listen to the truth He speaks; if I allow Him to reign over me and I try to follow His teaching more deeply, then the Kingdom of God grows. That Kingdom can only be good: who wouldn’t want earth to be more like heaven? But God will not impose His rule. He offers us this gift, and asks us to accept Him as Lord and King, so that He may reign in us and allow His Kingdom to grow in our world. Jesus rules over galaxies we haven’t even discovered. Will I let Him rule my heart too?

Fr Andrew

