

## Sermon for the Feast Day of Christ the King

### Readings: Jeremiah 23:1–6; Colossians 1:11–20 & Luke 23:33–43

When I started my career in sales, my boss introduced me to the KISS principle. Has everyone heard of this? It stands for Keep It Simple Stupid, and it means that things usually work best if they are kept simple, rather than made complicated.

The saying was apparently coined by Kelly Johnson, lead engineer at Lockheed Skunk Works, a company that developed spy planes for the US military. The principle is perhaps best explained by the story of Johnson handing a team of design engineers a handful of tools, with the challenge that the jet aircraft they were designing must be repairable by an average mechanic in the field under combat conditions with only these tools.

At a recent meeting of the Coburg Deanery, of which St Andrew's is a member parish, my colleague from Holy Trinity Coburg, which is basically a large, Arabic speaking Anglican congregation, told us that a number of young men from his local area had recently converted from Christianity to the Islamic Faith. When he spoke with these young men to find out why, he discovered that they found the Christian Faith and many of its doctrines to be very confusing.

I guess that's understandable too, just take the example of the different names or titles that are given to Jesus: Son of God, Son of Man, Lamb of God, Messiah, Christ, Immanuel, the Good Shepherd and there are many more. One of those other names is the name of the feast day that we are celebrating today: Christ the King.

Out of interest, I looked at what Wikipedia said about this: "Christ the King is a title of Jesus in Christianity referring to the idea of the Kingdom of God where the Christ is described as seated at the right hand of God. Many Christian denominations consider the kingly office of Christ to be one of the threefold offices: Christ is a prophet, priest, and king." I get why we use this title, and I'm not being critical of us observing a feast day named in honour of it, but you can imagine how confusing these two explanations alone would be for someone who came to church for the first time on the feast of Christ the King, and then afterwards went on Google to try and learn more about Jesus. Then throw in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity for good measure and I'm sure people would be struggling to understand, perhaps even people who have been attending church for a number of years.

I think the fundamental beliefs of the Christian Faith can be summed up from our today's readings as follows: "God wants to reconcile humanity to Himself, and has done so by revealing Himself to humanity in the person of Jesus, and by experiencing human suffering and death through Jesus for the sake of humanity, before raising Jesus from the dead to eternal life."

Jeremiah tells us of God's desire to reconcile humanity to Himself when he uses the analogy of sheep and shepherds to describe the people of Israel and the Jewish religious leaders. The religious leaders have lead the people astray and away from God, and so God promises to raise up new shepherds who will lead them back to Him, before He finally raises up the Messiah (Jesus) to usher in His kingdom of earth.

The Apostle Paul tells us, in the Letter to the Colossians, that God has revealed Himself to us in Jesus. “He is the image of the invisible God . . . for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible . . . all things have been created through him and for him. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.” (Colossians 1:15–19 NRSV)

And In today’s gospel reading, we learn that when Jesus was crucified, Pontius Pilate had a sign made that was placed above Jesus on the cross which read “King of the Jews”. The sign was meant to indicate the charge that had been brought against the prisoner which, in the case of Jesus, was treason. However this particular sign was also meant to be ironic. After all, a king who has been stripped and executed in public view, obviously has no kingdom. But of course the readers of Luke knew that through his life, death and resurrection, Jesus had just established the kingdom of God on earth.

Perhaps at times our faith can become a bit confusing, but I think we can use the KISS principle to help us to better understand it: “God wants to reconcile humanity to Himself, and has done so by revealing Himself to humanity in the person of Jesus, and by experiencing human suffering and death through Jesus for the sake of humanity, before raising Jesus from the dead to eternal life.”