

Kingdom Life

(Sermon preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist on November 23rd, 2025, Feast of Christ The King – Jeremiah 23:1-6, Colossians 1:11-20)

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We find ourselves at the end of the church year. Next week we will mark advent which is our time to prepare for Christmas. On this last day of the church year, we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King. On this day we ponder how we understand the kind of King Jesus is and the kind of kingdom he presides over and of which we are part.

We usually associate kings and kingdoms with power and prestige. With wealth and grand mansions. With having people to order around and serve them. In the Australian case, the king lives on the other side of the world and his ancestors and staff colonised this country, taking the land from the first peoples. Despite a referendum some years ago (which failed) we are still ultimately subject to his rules and have a Governor General as his representative here, who signs off on any rules which govern us.

Jesus and the bible have something to say about kingship. As Jesus is crucified, he is called 'King of the Jews' and has a discussion with Pilate about kingship, where he tells him that his kingdom and kingship is of a completely different order than the worldly kings Pilate and we know of. Luke has many parables about what the kingdom of God looks like - the Mustard Seed (the kingdom starts small but grows large), the Yeast (the kingdom is a hidden but transformative force), the Hidden Treasure and Pearl of Great Price (the kingdom is a treasure of immense value worth sacrificing everything for). ¹ Matthew 25 which is often read on this day speaks of the kind of people Jesus as King will have in his kingdom, it reads:

³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' ⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.' (Matthew 25:34-41-NRSVUE)

Our readings today add to the picture of the kind of King and Kingdom that God envisages and Jesus brings.

Jeremiah envisages the kind of kingdom, where all the people are gathered together again and welcomed back home. The king is described like a shepherd – one who protects and guides. The people will no longer live in fear, in darkness or distress, rather

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they will live in safety and enjoy life. The King will preside over them with justice and wisdom. Quite a different image to the kings of both Jeremiah's and our times.

Paul in his letter to the Colossians describes a little of the King and Kingdom that we participate in. First, he says we have been rescued from darkness and along with all the saints transferred into the Kingdom of the Son, we have been brought into the kingdom of Jesus. Paul then reminds us that Jesus and God share a significant relationship, one of mutuality, one where looking at Jesus we see what God is like. He reminds us that Jesus has been there since the beginning of time. This is a fairly cosmic picture and description of God's kingdom, God's lifem, but I think there are some important characteristics to be found in this description.

And what are the characteristics of this kingdom, this life we are welcomed into in the here and now?

There is God, this is where God dwells.

This is the place where everything is held together.

There is redemption,

There is forgiveness.

There is reconciliation.

There is peace.

The kind of kingdom that Jesus brings in is an upside-down kingdom, completely different to all the kind of worldly kingdoms we have seen in history and in the world around us today.

So, folks, in our individual lives, in our church life, in our church ministries let us be kingdom people.

Let us choose to live lives that ensure the hungry are fed, the thirsty are sated, the stranger welcomed, the naked clothed, the sick are taken care of and the imprisoned visited. Let us live justly, guiding and protecting the lost and fearful. Let us live reconciled and peaceful lives.

God has saved us from the darkness in our lives and transferred us into the Kingdom of Jesus, to the way of life where there is wellbeing for all, to the way of life that is joy filled and peace filled. Let's help bring such a world into the present, into the here and now. Amen.