

Sunday Readings for 22 November 2009

Christ the King - Year B

Daniel 7.9-10, 13-14

Revelation 1.4b-8

John 18.33b-37

FIRST READING Daniel 7.9–10, 13–14

A reading from the book of Daniel

9 As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. 10 A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgement, and the books were opened. 13 I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

SECOND READING Revelation 1.4b–8

A reading from the book of Revelation

4 Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood 6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.



GOSPEL John 18.33b–37

A reading from the holy gospel according to Saint John

33 Pilate called Jesus, and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" 34 Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" 35 Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me; what have you done?" 36 Jesus answered, "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world." 37 Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice."

The launch of the Hubble Telescope in 1990 has resulted in some of the most dramatic advances in scientific knowledge of the universe. With each upgrade carried out by Shuttle missions, more and more detail of the cosmos has been revealed, producing some astonishingly beautiful pictures of parts of the universe far distant from us in time and space. As our imagination is increasingly enriched by the sight of the reality which God has created, we can all the better picture for ourselves the Ancient of Days in Daniel's vision, his power and his glory sustaining the universe moment by moment. We can hardly begin to comprehend the majesty of his throne, or the authority by which his word brought Creation into being, and yet sovereignty over all things has been bestowed upon his beloved Son, who calls us to become citizens of the eternal kingdom of God himself.

Jesus both preached the good news of the kingdom of God and made it possible for us to enter it by means of the atonement which he made for us by the shedding of his blood on the Cross. He who gave his life for us in suffering and shame, unjustly condemned to die as the lowest of criminals, is the "ruler of kings on earth" and the first to be raised from the dead. All of this world's rulers, all our proud empires and kingdoms, are subject to his judgement, and it is by his just and righteous rule that all our earthly expressions of power are measured and tested. Every earthly ruler should tremble at the prospect of answering to the Lord for their stewardship of his creation and their care of his people, as should every sinner who has fallen short of the love and the glory of God. The time will come when all must stand before him and account for the record of their lives, for the Lord is Omega as well as Alpha, concluding and fulfilling the work which he began long ago.

Anyone concerned with the exercise of power should consider the example of Jesus Christ, who prevailed in the conflict which ultimately matters, preferring self-effacing humility and sacrifice of self as the means to victory. The Son of Man, accused of treason against the state and on trial for his life, speaks quietly of his kingship in the presence of his interrogator, who is accustomed to exercise the power of the sword and of the Roman emperor without too much concern for justice. But even the cynical Pontius Pilate is sufficiently disturbed by this encounter for us to be able to read into the dialogue a sense that here was someone unlike anyone else he had ever encountered, a king whose rule lay beyond his comprehension. Paradoxically it is Pilate's weakness which brings him to pass so unjust a sentence: justice requires the strength and courage exemplified by Jesus in whose kingdom the truth is always paramount. However exalted our own laws, the kingdom of God stands above us.

Rev Stephen Trott

PARISH NOTICES

www.pitsford.org.uk



SUNDAY 22 November - Christ the King

8am Holy Communion - Pitsford

10am SUNG EUCHARIST - Boughton

SUNDAY 29 November - Advent Sunday (Fifth Sunday of November)

8am Holy Communion - Boughton

10am FAMILY SERVICE - Pitsford

SUNDAY 6 December 2009 - Advent 2

8am Holy Communion - Boughton

10am CHRISTINGLE SERVICE - Pitsford

SUNDAY 13 December 2009 - Advent 3

8am Holy Communion - Pitsford

10am CHRISTINGLE SERVICE - Boughton

PITSFORD PCC meets on Tuesday 24 November at 8pm at Collyweston House, High Street