

# Commentary on Sunday Scripture – Year C

## Feast of Christ the King

### **First reading:**

(2 Samuel 5.1-3)

*David Anointed King*

David is a fascinating character. As a leader, he had a charm and charisma that were irresistible. There is no doubt that he was ambitious. When the women sang, 'Saul has killed his thousands and David his tens of thousands', it was music to his ears. The king's son fell in love with him and gave him his own prince's gear. The king's daughter fell in love with him, and he accepted her as a good dynastic marriage; but he never had children by her, although he was not lacking in sexual drive (Bathsheba was to come later).

He set up a protection racket in Judah and so won the loyalty of the tribal leaders there; they first anointed him king of Judah at Hebron, the southern tribal capital. Finally, after Saul's death, the elders of the northern tribes, Israel, came to anoint him king as well, to reign over the whole country. But he also took the first steps to setting up the Temple cult and was ever after remembered for that.

It was to David that the promises of God's eternal monarchy were given that were to be fulfilled in Jesus. These promises echo down and down the scriptures; they were the basis of all Israel's hope.

### **Question:**

*What do you consider leadership qualities before God?*

### **Second reading:**

(Colossians 1.12-20)

*The Kingdom of Forgiveness*

Way back in the summer, on the fourteenth Ordinary Sunday of the Year, we heard all but the first part of this reading, for it celebrates the unrivalled position of Jesus as firstborn not only in the order of creation, but also in the Resurrection.

In the order of creation, Christ is the image of the unseen God, the model or template on which God created the world, the Wisdom of God, so the firstborn and yet himself uncreated. In the order of the Resurrection also he is the firstborn, bringing all things to perfection, and so the crown of creation. Before this we today have a significant preface.

Paul is writing, with a slight air of surprise, to the gentiles: the gentiles too are enabled to enter into this inheritance, to join Christ in this kingdom, promised to David and fulfilled in Jesus. As this year's gospel readings have taught us again and again, it is not a kingdom that we can earn. All we need to do is to submit ourselves for forgiveness. Not all that easy, perhaps! Put it the other way round: all we need to do is stop pretending to others and ourselves that we are perfect.

### **Question:**

*What sickness in myself is the most frequent cause of falling?*

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## **Gospel:**

(Luke 23.35-43)

### *The King of Forgiveness*

The crucifixion scene in Luke, as in all the gospels, is the climax. And Jesus is stressed as being King. The soldiers mock him as such, but the gospel's use of irony ensures that we understand that they are saying more than they realize. They mock him also as Saviour ('Save yourself and us as well!'), and especially in Luke, from the Infancy Stories onwards, is Jesus seen as the true Saviour God.

In Luke, the crucifixion scene is primarily a scene of forgiveness, in which Jesus carries on to the very end his work of forgiveness, which Luke has underlined throughout the gospel. It begins with the women of Jerusalem mourning for Jesus, and ends with all the spectators departing, beating their breasts, recognizing their universal guilt. Jesus spontaneously forgives his executioners, asking for them God's forgiveness before they even ask themselves. He welcomes into his Kingdom of Paradise the bandit who spontaneously acknowledges his guilt.

It is the climax of the reversal of values that we have seen throughout this gospel that the King should be the wretched figure dying on the Cross, and that homage should be paid to him not by dignified courtiers, but by another wretched figure, dying by his side.

## **Question:**

*What sort of person should a citizen of the Kingdom of Forgiveness be?*

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