

Sermon Sunday November 22<sup>nd</sup> Christ the King.

I'm guessing that some of you have been following the political events in America over the last few weeks. It was tense. There was nail-biting. There was waiting – lots & lots of waiting! This was followed by jubilation by some, rejoicing that their voices had been heard, their votes counted, and much longed-for change was on the way. But! Then the drama really heats up, as one side refuses to relinquish power and casts accusations about foul play, and so on it runs.

This all paled into insignificance in comparison to the election that was held amongst children in the Howarth household! Our 8yr old son was nothing short of entranced by the battle for power in the US, waking up each morning and beginning his day by asking what had happened while he was asleep. He decided we needed a President of our house and launched his own 'election campagin'. Posters were put up, which read "Do you want a better navy? Do you want people to help you? Do you want to be rescued quickly if you fall off your bike?" Obviously, covering the crucial issues of our time!! Somehow, an older sister was cajoled into taking part and put up one single poster, largely stating that she would switch the lights off if people left them on, and that she would make us nice food! Election speeches were given after much practising by one, and off the cuff from another. In a bizarre twist of terrible parenting in which the parents tried to wangle it so that each got some votes, the less passionate candidate was elected!!! Crushing defeat for our 8yr old who was very aware that his sister wasn't even that bothered about winning!

At what age or stage in our lives does the need for power become apparent? When do we become aware of it? Why do we desire it so much? Paul writes about power in Ephesians – Ephesus was, at that time, a centre of great power. This was based largely on its status as a centre for numerous cults and religions which called on their deities to affect the lives of people on earth – friends or foes. The ultimate demonstration of power for Paul, was God's physical resurrection of Jesus – to live and walk amongst his people again. Jesus is the holder of the supreme power in the world, and Paul calls on the Ephesians to utilise this power in their daily lives.

After Paul has given thanks in prayer in the opening verses for those whom he was writing to, he moves onto talking about knowledge. Here Paul is talking about knowledge that is fundamental to our well being. The variance in vocabulary (revelation, wisdom, illumination & knowledge) are a reminder that there are different types of knowledge. I have factual knowledge about a variety of wines, but it has little impact on my everyday life. I have personal experience of giving birth to, and raising children, yet I lack any kind of professional training or knowledge – that doesn't mean I am doing a terrible job (the election aside). Here, Paul is talking about knowledge which comes through an experience of revelation, of our eyes being opened and through the experience of a personal relationship with God. This is something we need to persevere with because relationships need nurturing. There is an ancient Proverb that says "Knowledge is like a garden; if it is not cultivated, it cannot be harvested". Cultivating our relationship with God is something that all Christians should focus on.

The second part of Paul's prayer focuses on the great might of God and also hope – "with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you". God gave Jesus to be head over the church with some commentaries suggesting he was given as the head over all reality. On this festival of Christ the King Sunday, which we observe as the last Sunday in the calendar of the church, we are reminded and we celebrate Christ as our glorified King. This is an occasion to remember the journey that Christ took and how it should affect our own lives. Christ was both humiliated and victorious at various points in his life and we should remember that as we journey on in our lives, we will all, at times, experience both of those things.

When Paul talks about hope it is the hope that we have in the gospel, and the hope that we take out from this place and into our homes and communities. It's the hope we hang onto in times of darkness and when we feel overwhelmed with difficulties. It's the hope that sustains and nourishes us during a time of pandemic and through another lock down. It's the hope of the resurrection that is so important to us all, and it's the hope that as Christians we are to tell the world of. The world is in need of hope in a way that few of us will have experienced previously. The knowledge that we all have of a relationship with God, combined with the power of the Holy Spirit is

the thing that enables us to share the hope we have in Jesus with those who most need it. We are the agents of Jesus here on earth – the hands and feet who will continue the ministry into the future.

Let William Barclay have the last word from his 'Epistle to the Ephesians' he says "There is a legend which tells how Jesus went back to heaven after His time on earth..... The angels were talking to Him and Gabriel said "You must have suffered terribly for men down there.... Do they all know about how you loved them and what you did for them? What have you done to let everyone know about it?" Jesus answered "I have asked Peter and James and John and a few others to make to make it the business of their lives to tell others about me, and the others still others, and yet others, until the farthest man on the widest circle knows about what I have done". Gabriel looked very doubtful, for Gabriel knew very well what poor stuff men were made of. "Yes" he said, "but what if they fail? What if the people who come after them forget? What if, away in the twentieth century people just don't tell others about you? Haven't you made any other plans?" And Jesus answered "I haven't made any other plans. I am counting on them".