

November 2020 is indeed a busy (and unprecedented) month. It's the month of my birth, the Melb Cup, Our PM visits Japan for ONE day in the middle times of COVID isolation, Asia – pacific trade deals with PM's and Presidents meeting via ZOOM, and of course can we forget the US Presidential elections and if you are a NRL fan the Maroons winning State of Origin. And today we recognise Christ the King Sunday today – in November, the last Sunday before ADVENT>

Reflecting on the theme of Christ the King and today's Gospel of Judgment and the so called parable for the Sheep and the Goats, I can't help but think about our world leaders, Kings and Queens, Presidents and Presidents –Elect, Prime ministers and Premiers, and ask, who do we or should we bow down to? Who do we sit under as followers of Christ? Who is it that rules over us, and is the Bible offering an alternative view?

Christ the king Sunday invites us to focus on Christ as King, as the one in whom we give our allegiance. King of Kings and Lord of Lord and Prince of Peace, terms that sit with us or maybe not?

Now I must admit that recently I have had a bit of an AH moment . I have always thought, and appears wrongly, that Christ the King Sunday was an ancient liturgical Sunday designed by the early church way back in the 1-3rd centuries. It was not!

I was stunned to read that Christ the King Sunday is a relatively recent occurrence, less than 100 years ago. Christ the King Sunday has its origins in the political hot bed of Europe in 1925 and the rise of Fascism in Italy and Germany between the two world wars. Political leaders were claiming supremacy, and how was the church to respond?

Heidi Neumark, in her book *Sanctuary: Being Christian In the Wake of Trump*, writes
"For churches that follow a calendar of liturgical seasons, Christ the King Sunday falls on the final

Sunday of the church year, the Sunday before Advent, crowning the year. It's a relatively recent addition to the calendar that was introduced by Pope Pius XI in 1925 as the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. In 1925, in Italy, where the pope lived, Benito Mussolini, the leader of the National Fascist Party, had claimed that supremacy for himself. Over in Germany, also in 1925, Hitler had published his antisemitic manifesto, Mein Kampf, and rose in his bid for absolute power as the leader of the Nazi party. In light of these political developments, Pius XI decided to boldly assert that Jesus Christ is the one who reigns supreme and to remind Christians that their allegiance is to their spiritual ruler, Jesus Christ, as opposed to any earthly leader who claimed supremacy."

So who should the church follow? The way of the nations, or the way of the Servant King – Christ?

Jesus talks in parables once more, of judgment, sheep, goats, left, right, in, out, heaven, hell, social action, good works.

I believe the link here is that the Shepherd King call the **NATIONS** together and proceeds to describe the fate and judgment of those who do Christ's will and those who do not. A judgement of the Nations!

A question could be asked of this reading – how will a nation be judged? How will our Queen or King, be judged? How will our nation or PM or Presidents, or Princes respond to the nation, to the people, to CV-19, to Climate Change and emissions reductions, terrorism, reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, the SE Asia trade talks..

How will the President of the USA lead that country into the next 4 years? Who will you live under? Political rule or the Rule of Christ.

The Shepherd King calls the nations together and divides the sheep from the goats, said Jesus.

Those on the right will be allowed entrance into the kingdom, while those on the left will be denied it.

And the great surprise is that those who thought they were religious or spruoke quotes from, or hold up bibles in times of political unrest, turn out to be not as good as they thought, and those who thought they failed, were told they did a better job than they supposed.

The text suggests we are to see every individual as though he or she was Christ himself and the criteria by which we will be judged will be simple acts of kindness. It also suggests that we are judged not on the bad that we do, but on the good **we do not do**.

Jesus says it is **the nations** who are gathered for judgment.

When we ask how a nation cares for its sick, and how a nation cares for its prisoners, and even how a nation cares for the poor and the hungry, for its minority citizens, we are asking very important questions which need to be asked. Nations do have the means to respond to whole people groups in a way that individuals do not.

But lets not make the mistake of thinking that this means it's just governments who are being judged. A nation is still the sum of its people and at least in "democratic" countries like ours, the government is, to a large extent a reflection of the people and their values and opinions.

The nation won't change unless its people change, and if we want the people to change, then we'd better be prepared for the change to begin with us and ask how we personally should respond to the teaching of these words of Jesus.

maybe Jesus is saying that every person you encounter, and especially those usually considered the least, **is an icon**, or representation of Jesus Christ. And if we say that each person is an icon of Christ, then it is the very things that

cause them to be regarded as the least — their sickness, their poverty, their brokenness, their destitution, their anti-social habits — that most reveal Jesus to us.

In their brokenness and wretchedness we see the image of the suffering Christ — the servant King.

"What you do to the least of these, my brothers and sisters, you are doing to me." Maybe our response to this passage is to contemplate the Christ revealed in these 'icons'? Not the Presidents, pop stars or sporting champions, but Christ, the servant King and to follow him

if we spend a bit more time contemplating the meaning of the icons of the street corners, news reports and tv ads, even the Christmas bowl appeal, we are more likely to begin to see how and where the reign of God can begin, or continue, with and through us.