

CHRIST THE KING (B)

Kings and queens today, especially in the Western World, are by and large, figure heads. But way back in history, they were autocrats and mostly ruled through fear. However, they couldn't have done so without willing accomplices.

But are secular leaders today that much different? To maintain power they have their spin-doctors who embellish the positives of a situation to woo public opinion and financial backers who lean on them for favours. You'll have heard of the proverb: 'when money talks the truth is silent'. The Kingdom of God, on the other hand is transparent and based on undiluted truth. There are no hidden agendas, no backroom deals. Jesus said: 'those who live by the truth come out into the light.'

The Gospel reminds us that the Kingdom of God is either within us or it's not there at all. The battle between truth and falsehood goes on in the minds, hearts and consciences of each person. The decisions we make, our motivation for action and the way we form our consciences will be the litmus test as to whether we're subjects of God's Kingdom or not.

At times facing the truth about ourselves can be difficult – extremely so. I would say that modern day culture is underpinned by what is known as a utilitarian philosophy. The English philosopher Jeremy Bentham in 1776 said that "it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong" He means temporal happiness. This way of thinking however, is more often than not at odds with the teaching of Christ whose Kingdom is not of this world. St Augustine said that 'wrong is wrong even though everybody's doing it, right is right even though nobody's doing it. Remember, despite initially winning their approval, the majority of people deserted Jesus at the end because they were only interested in a temporal kingdom. So in lots of areas of present day society

people are in a quandary about the rightness or wrongness of certain actions when they base their decisions on the illusive utilitarianism philosophy referred to.

The scene before Pilate provides a classic encounter between the Kingdoms of truth and falsehood. Jesus emphasised to Pilate that His Kingdom is not of this world. The whole trial of Jesus was a charade. He was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. False witnesses were brought forward during his trial. Barabbas, the murderer, was set loose. In washing his hands Pilate buried the truth. He condemned an innocent man even though he told the crowd he could find no reason for the death sentence. In so doing he went against his better judgement in order to avoid trouble with Caesar and the unruly mob who were clamouring for his crucifixion. When faced with this situation a man's life didn't count for much.

So which voice do we follow? Is it the voice of Pilate who buries the truth and goes along with the pack or the voice of Jesus who says the same words to me as he said to Pilate: "All who are on the side of Truth listen to my voice".

Last week we spoke about God's judgement. St Paul tells us: 'all the truth about us will be brought out in the law court of Christ'. We need have no fear of the final verdict if, despite opposition we stick by the truth when called upon to do so. The Kingdom of God will surely be ours.