

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 too have their spin-doctors and financial backers who can lean on them for favours. You'll have heard of the proverb: 'when money talks the truth is often compromised'. A good example of this is the Jamal Khashoggi outrage in Turkey. The Kingdom of God, on the other hand is transparent and based on undiluted truth. There are no hidden agendas or 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 i.e that actions are right only if they are useful or if they benefit the majority. This way of thinking however, can be very much at odds with Christian morality. St Augustine said that 'wrong is wrong even though everybody's doing it, right is right even though nobody's doing it. Remember the majority of people deserted Jesus when he confronted them with the truth. So in lots of areas of present day society people are in denial about the rightness or wrongness of certain actions but they base their decisions on a false philosophy.

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 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 we don't flinch from the truth when called upon to do so. The Kingdom of God will then be ours.