

Christ the King Luke 22: 33-43

What a sobering image as we come to celebrate Christ as our King. The one we revere and hold as our pattern, died a tragic death but in his suffering he blessed the common criminal hanging alongside him saying; 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.' So essentially the message from this gospel is that we are forgiven our sins and eternal life is offered to us. So, how do we experience this amazing gift freely given?

Jesus' power is the power of heaven, it is very different to earthly power. It's the power of the Spirit of God, the power of forgiveness, reconciliation, mercy and love. Jesus' power invites us to become God's beloved children.

So, what are the characteristics of Jesus power? It is based in love. Love unto death, love without harm, love without limits, love that even death cannot end. We profess this in the prayers of every funeral service. We commit the one we love into God's love. Apart from participation through words we enter into God's orbit of love in the ritual actions of the Eucharist. We reach out our hands to receive Jesus.

At the altar we share in a ritual that binds our community together and it sustains our hope. As we approach Advent, we are reminded that this is the power of Emmanuel, God with us.

When we look over all the gospel stories about the disciples we know that they floundered and misunderstood Jesus' teaching even though they witnessed his power first-hand. Think of the healing episodes, the stilling of the storm, the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Jesus' teaching them pushed outside of the boundaries of their traditional experience. Jesus encouraged his followers to move beyond what was comfortable into a place of insecurity.

If truth be told, I find myself in that place of insecurity as on this special feast day, and I wonder if I am up to the challenge of

presenting myself before the throne to answer for my actions. But we have hope because of Jesus' promise of forgiveness. Do you recognise that you are exposed to Jesus' power in the Eucharist?

You haven't heard me speak recently about HeartEdge, but Reverend Sam Wells has some incredible things to say about the Eucharist. To me, Wells' words are utterly shocking because I find them so unexpected. His explanation of what happens in the Mass gives me new insight into the essence of its mysterious power.

Wells talks about three types of homelessness. Firstly, what we might see in their street; in the community. People who for some reason have experienced a crisis and are in need of shelter. Next, there are members of any congregation who are experiencing their own homelessness in an internal way. Many are searching and are in need of relationship. Any one of us can know humiliation, failure or scorn and isolation. Then Wells identifies a third kind of homelessness. He explains it via retelling the parable of the great banquet. Jesus says then as now; "I have no home but yours". Yours is the home I long to enter. Yours is the life I long to resurrect. Yours are the burdens I long to share.

Wells says we continually slam the door in Jesus' face. Perhaps we do it because we fear closeness with God. Wells explains that 'this is the shame of God'. It was not only on the cross, but today every minute it comes from those in whom he might expect the most welcome. Wells then makes a profound statement. For me it is a 'hang on to your hat moment'! In the Eucharist these three kinds of homelessness come together. In the ritual that we will soon enact, **the rejected of the world, the failures of our lives, and the broken heart of God meet.** I will repeat that. Wells explains; "in the Eucharist the shroud of shame **is lifted and the banquet of grace**

**begins**; a formal action becomes a playful party and justice and isolation are transformed into joy”.<sup>1</sup>

I find myself reeling every time I read this **explanation of grace** and its invitation to growth and change. If we can think and feel ourselves into this image the Eucharist, the sacred meal of **homecoming, we may well be provoked to think and act differently.**

The Eucharist is the place where the mysterious power that is both mighty and humble may be found. The two words don't seem to fit together. How can one be both mighty and humble? In today's gospel we are called us to see Jesus' power to forgive even as his own body is broken. So as you reach out your hands you might think about meeting God in a new way. Christ The King waits to celebrate a **homecoming with us.** As Anglicans we believe in the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. He is present at this table as both guest and host. Another interesting paradox to think on. As we meet him today, we are challenged as a community to let down our barriers, to become vulnerable, to need in each other as we make his kingdom in this place

AMEN

### Reference

Wells, S. *The Future That Is Bigger Than The Past* Canterbury Press Norwich UK 2019

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<sup>1</sup> Wells, S. *The Future That Is Bigger Than The Past* p114