

SUNDAY PLUS

King of our hearts

The Kingdom of God is here

by Dr Bridie Stringer

Getting our heads around the end of life as we know it is not easy. The writer and Anglican vicar Dave Tomlinson has expressed it like this: “When all is said and done, however, the afterlife is really above my pay grade.”

Today’s readings from Daniel and Revelation take us to places which are more in keeping with elaborate fantasy fiction than the stories of the prophets, ancient kings and life of Jesus and his followers. They are, in a way, an attempt to answer the great imponderable question: “What will happen next?” The stories in Daniel’s account are connected to the exile of the Israelites in Babylon. Daniel’s dreams and his interpretation of them serve to

assure the exiles that all is not lost.

His promise of final victory with the arrival of the “one like a human being” is of course fulfilled in the Gospel reading from John, where the one who is like us in everything but sin stands before the Roman governor and speaks of his kingdom.

Pilate asks: “What is truth?” not recognising that Truth is standing before him.

So whilst we wait for the arrival of the end time, whether that is the end of our own time on earth or the end of all life as we know it, we might perhaps remind ourselves that Jesus told his followers that the kingdom of God is here. He brought it with him and has asked us to bring it to fruition. We know the truth when we see it and more importantly, when we live it.

Dr Bridie Stringer, who is married with two daughters, a son-in-law and “two adorable grandsons”, is also an associate lecturer in Pastoral Theology at St Mary’s University, Twickenham.

Read the signs

by Catherine Pepinster

What sort of king do we celebrate on this feast day? Certainly not a brutal, absolute ruler like Herod who ordered the slaughter of the innocents, or his brother Herod Antipas who had John the Baptist beheaded to please Salome.

Jesus tells Pilate that he is indeed a king, but he turns kingship on its head. This is a monarch who serves the servants and is a prince of peace.

“**Our King went to the ends of the universe in order to embrace and save every living being. He did not condemn us, nor did he conquer us, and he never disregarded our freedom, but he paved the way with a humble love that forgives all things, hopes all things, sustains all things.**

Pope Francis

Above all he is a king of our hearts: “To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father”, says the reading from the book of the Apocalypse.

Christ invites us to join him in his lineage. The Jews always knew they were a chosen people, but Christ, as it says in the first book of Peter, also made us “a royal priesthood, a holy nation”.

Catherine Pepinster is a former editor of The Tablet and the author of The Keys and the Kingdom – the British and the papacy from John Paul II to Francis, published by T&T Clark.

Right is might

by Stephen Davies

As I wake up in the morning and listen to the news, I am often glad that God’s kingdom is not of this world. This is not how I imagine, nor believe, God’s kingdom to be.

It can feel as though the “kings” of today, our world leaders and dominating powers, get there by shouting the loudest, ignoring the weak and marginalised, and by bullying and threatening. Christ the King arrives into Jerusalem humble and riding on a donkey. His crown is of thorns. Christ turns the power of the world’s kingdoms upside down. Christ’s rule is simple, if difficult to live out: “love one another. Just as I have loved you”.

Although Christ’s kingdom is not of this world, we are still called to live by his rule, to love one another and all

of God’s creation. And we can take comfort in the fact that God’s kingdom is both now and not yet.

Stephen Davies is the Red Box Director for Missio and the Mill Hill Missionaries.

**Loving Lord,
king and centre
of our hearts,
reign in my
heart and make
it a tiny part of
your kingdom
of peace. Amen.**

Today: Daniel 7:13-14
Apocalypse 1:5-8
John 18:33-37

Monday: Apocalypse 14:1-5
Luke 21:1-4

Tuesday: Apocalypse 14:14-19
Luke 21:5-11

Wednesday: Apocalypse 15:1-4
Luke 21:12-19

Thursday: Apocalypse 18:1-2.
21-23; 19:1-3. 9
Luke 21:20-28

Friday (E&W): Romans 10:9-18
Matthew 4:18-22

Friday (S): St Andrew (Solemnity):
Wisdom 3:1-9
Romans 10:9-18
Matthew 4:18-22

Saturday: Apocalypse 22:1-7
Luke 21:34-36

Next Sunday: Jeremiah 33:14-16
1 Thessalonians 3:12 – 4:2
Luke 21:25-28. 34-36