

Sermon St Andrews November 24

Lectionary: Christ the king. John 18:33-40 & Psalm 93

Introduction

Welcome:

I'm not Jenny Whittaker as advertised. I'm David. You may not recognise me in a suit. I used to wear a suit every day before my accident. But don't worry. Who is at the front, and what they look like is not critical. The only reason to be at the front is to **point the spotlight at God.**

(Mat 18:20 NIV) "***For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.***" This comes after verses describing the **power and authority of God available to his disciples.** When people ask what Church was like -we don't tend to talk about the preacher. **Visitors talk about the people. Their love for one another and others. The reality of God *in them* and their lives.**

If Chris the King walked in now -how would you feel?

I offer this prayer from the lectionary this morning:

"God our Father. Help us to hear the call of Christ the King

And to follow in his service, whose kingdom has no end;

For he reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God one glory.

Amen"

Notices *Let's hear any notices about our work for his service.*

Hymn/Song **Hymn: Be still for the presence of the Lord.**

Children attend their groups.

Prayer When in the presence of God, we remember our **deliberate acts of sin and how our many transgressions have separated us** from him during the week. Before we pray about these barriers to him -some thoughts...

I read from Matthew 6:5-8 (The Message) This was How Jesus introduced the Lord's prayer that follow in verses 9-15

"And when you come before God, **don't turn that into a theatrical production either.** All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat?

"Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. **Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage.** The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.

"The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They're full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God.

Don't fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need.

Bear with me. The Lord's prayer is challenging on many levels.

- **We have all learned our own version.** And our version is the right one. Often the one we learned as a child.
- Or we could use the authorised one. **If one is authorised, what are the others?** On the CE website there is one version now called *Traditional*, and another called *Contemporary*.
- **When we pray together confusion** can reign when versions get mixed up.
- The Lord's Prayer can feel so familiar, **we may say it without engaging with its meaning.**

The Lord's Prayer in the bible. Mat 6:9-15 from the NIV.

"This, then, is how you should pray: "

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, (v9)

your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (v10)

Give us today our daily bread. (v11)

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. (v12)

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.' (v13)

For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. (v14)

But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." (v15)

When we say the Lord's prayer...

- **Are we really seeking forgiveness** for our **deliberate sin** and **unknown transgressions?** (V12)
- Are we asking God for **his Kingdom to come?** (v10)
If so, am I willing let my kingdom go?
- Does 'our' version have the additional last line not in Matthew?
"For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever."

We keep hearing about the kingdom. More of that later.

Lord's Prayer

Let's say the Lord's prayer together. (Need a slide)

Let us

- *be **IN** the words,*
- ***mean** the words,*
- *and **not simply say** them.*

*If what we hear now a **meaningful prayer – perfect!***

*This is **more important than presentational performance.***

Our focus should be on our God, who is here with us.

Worship before sermon

Possibilities/Suggestions

At the Name of Jesus

Bible Readings (***)**

Psalm 93 & John 18:33-40

Sermon: (David Channon)

I think Ian Price once said, that when reading the bible, it can help to put yourself in the role of one of the people.

I hope you forgive me, but I found it very easy to empathise with Roman nobleman and leader Pilot and his predicament in this morning's reading.

Pilate was **probably educated, somewhat wealthy, and well-connected politically and socially. A man with worldly authority.**

Status, Education and Wealth – Worldly values today

BUT: A man **completely out of place and confused by the upside-down leadership and authority of the Kingdom of God.** Too many barriers. **He was in the world and very much of the world.**

Another context but... (John 8:23 NIV) Jesus said, "***You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.***"

The Kingdom of God.

I don't have a favourite version of the bible. I read multiple versions. From the more literal translations, to the paraphrased.

Christ the king, the lectionary theme for today.

Psalm 93:

- "The LORD reigns." NIV and NASB
- "The LORD is king," NRSV and NLT (Capitalized **LORD=God**)
- "GOD is King" MSG

Ruling authority and strength is expressed clearly in all translations. The power and authority of God differs greatly from the authority of man-made, self-serving rulers, like Pilot.

In the John 18:36 we heard Jesus tell Pilot,

"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place." (v36)

Pilot had questions:

What, When and Where is the Kingdom of God.

Like me, Pilot might be better with questions than answers.

What is the Kingdom of God?

"Why are no servants preventing this arrest if you are a king?"

When is the kingdom of God?

"When is the Kingdom of God coming? I'm dealing with you NOW."

Where is the Kingdom of God?

"I have troops poised and ready to serve my needs. Where are your servants?"

Jesus spoke about some of this during his ministry.

(John 3:3:NIV) "Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."*

When and where is the Kingdom of God? (Luke 17:20-25 NIV)

*“Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the **kingdom of God** would come, Jesus replied, “The coming of the **kingdom of God** is **not something that can be observed,***

*nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because **the kingdom of God is in your midst.**” (v17)*

Then he said to his disciples, “The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it.

People will tell you, ‘There he is!’ or ‘Here he is!’ Do not go running off after them.

For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other.

But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. “

The upside-down leadership of Christ clearly expressed and demonstrated by **leadership for the Kingdom of God, not the man-made leadership of worldly kingdom values.**

(Luke 17 20-21) we read that the physical location of the “**coming of the Kingdom of God is not something that can be observed**” but nonetheless is “**in your midst.**” (Some NIV versions have “within you”)

The contextual challenge in the language comes from the Greek word ἔν (en) which we can think of is IN. (John 1:1)

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος, καὶ ὁ Λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος.

In the beginning **was** the Word, and **the Word was with God**, and the Word **was God**.

Dr Ben Pugh (Cliff college) engages with its multiple meanings
(in, by or with) in his book “One with Christ”

In Luke 17:17 in relation to the Kingdom of God, we have the Greek word **ἐντοῦ** translated **within, inside, among... us**

οὐδε ἔρουσιν ἰδοῦ ὧδε ἢ ἰδοῦ ἐκεῖ· ἰδοῦ γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ
ἐντοῦ ὑμῶν ἐστίν.

There are various translations. Irrespective of physical Location, **the key question for me. Where is the Kingdom of God in relation to us. To his people.**

(1Co 6:17 NIV) **But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.**

The spirit of God is in his PEOPLE, and we are in him.

Heart felt and Soul full.

To know and feel his presence.

*Allow our soul to be full of God our creator,
so that we can be as free, as we were created to be.*

People judge a church by its people not just its preachers. God is in all his people. **Sharing God's Love and Mission** includes the **powerful witness of the way we treat people and live out the reality of God in our lives.** A challenge to Christians here today!

With mission, if you really have to, you can also use words.

Caution

(Mat 21:43 NIV) "***Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.***"

Our purpose for him is paramount.

In truth, Kingdom of God commentary is inexhaustible.

The Truth (John 18:37-38)

*"You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to **testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.**"*

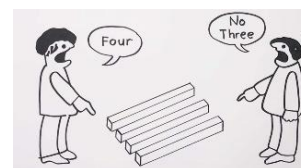
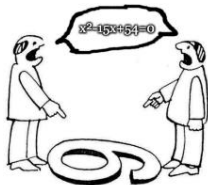
*"**What is truth?**" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again, to the Jews gathered there, and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him."*

This is the **only place in the bible where Jesus was asked a question but there is no record of an answer.** I was on Bishop Alistair's leadership team when he published the book "**TRUTH An Unanswered Question**"

Why is there no record of a verbal response from Jesus?
(Again, I have more questions than answers.)

Truth is not yes/no or zero/one matter. There is too much digital thinking in an analogue world. Black and white in a grey world.

Educated can even interpret numbers differently in relation to their own perspective and understanding.



Worldly wisdom and **sounding clever falls short in a spiritual perspective. NT Greek says... I know a little Greek. Great food.**

Half-truths added together can paint an untrue picture. In courts we ask for the Truth, the whole truth **and nothing but the truth.**

Biblical events written by over 40 different authors make the bible **more** truthful and genuine. If the police hear different **witnesses describe things the same way, it could just be a well-rehearsed pre-prepared story. Not firsthand evidence at all.** We understand and describe things from our own perspective. Just like many biblical authors.

More questions? **Why can't humans hear a dog whistle?** I could offer a **truthful** answer about frequency reception in human ears. BUT Why can't humans can hear a dog whistle? **The real truth is: dogs can't whilst.**

Perhaps Jesus knew that the best way to learn about truth, **is to see "The Truth"** in action. To keep our eyes upon him. Actions speaking loudly -like the many of his **enacted parables.**

As Eugene Peterson says: "Wisdom is not primarily about knowing the truth, although it certainly includes that; **it is skill in living.**"

(James 2:17 MSG) ***"Isn't it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense?"***

Most communication is nonverbal. **How you live often more important than words.** We need to live our faith demonstrably.

Rev Paul talked about his heroes in faith in his last sermon here. **Many listed in Hebrews 11.** He did not mention a more modern hero of mine, Dr Martyn Luther King. **He lived his truth demonstrably.**

Around midnight on January 27, 1956 his parsonage phone rang. He and his family were threatened for his non-violent response for equality. It was making a difference.

Following the way and the truth was frightening in the extreme.

“Lord, I am here taking a stand for what I believe is right. But now I am afraid. The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I've come to the point where I can't face it alone.”

Have you been in that place? He heard an inner voice saying.

*“Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness, stand up for justice, **stand up for truth.** And lo I will be with you, even until the end of the world.”* And I'll tell you, I've seen the lightning flash. I've heard the thunder roll. I felt sin-breakers dashing, trying to conquer my soul. But I heard the voice of Jesus saying still to fight on. He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone. No, never alone. No, never alone. He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone.”

With that assurance. His courage returned.

Kingdom of God with us.

(Heb 13:5-6 NIV) “keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”

Heb 13:6 So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”

*In discussion with Pilot, Jesus did what the father asked despite knowing how he would suffer and die. **Have WE really given our lives to Christ? Martyn Luther King did.***

“Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land!

And so I'm happy, tonight.

I'm not worried about anything.

I'm not fearing any man!

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!”

I think we know that he was shot and killed.

(Matthew 16:24 NIVUK) “Then Jesus said to his disciples, If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

To conclude this sermon

(John 14:6 NIV) *“Jesus answered, “I am the way **and the truth and the life.** No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

The Kingdom of God is for all people. But we **need to let our kingdom go**, for his kingdom to come into our lives.

We are supposed to **love people and use things**. We go wrong when we start **loving things and using people**.

(Albert Schweitzer, the French theologian), ‘**Example is not the main thing in influencing others** – it is the only thing.’

God is here. The New testament church is made of people built upon Jesus, the chief cornerstone. **We are ‘living stones’ for the kingdom of God.** (1 Peter 2:5) (Ephesians 2:20–22),

We must!

(Heb 12:1-2 NIV) *“...**throw off everything that hinders, and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**”*

Are you left with unanswered questions?

I may stand at the front, but **I don’t have all the answers. But I’d like to point you to Jesus. The one who is the answer.**

Prayerful Pause

What is the inner voice of God saying to you today.
(Still small voice image -finger to mouth)



Beyond words: (Tozer) **“More spiritual progress can be made in one short moment of **speechless silence in the awesome presence of God** than in years of mere study.”**

Intercessions (****)

Worship Team

Hymn: Turn your eyes upon Jesus.

Children Return

When we approach God **we need to be more childlike**. We may need to **put aside our well-oiled auto pilot clever clogs well-rehearsed liturgy**. We need to reach out to Jesus just as we are. We need to say it, how we feel it, with honesty. He knows what we need anyway.

(Mat 19:14 NIV) Jesus said, "***Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.***"

Hear from the children...

Hymn/Song.

Alleluia sing to Jesus

Close

My gracious Master, and my God, assist me proclaim your truth, to share your love in word and deed. To live with you and in the honour of your name.

AMEN

(Summary. Lectionary: Christ the king. Truthfully following Jesus as THE priority. Following Jesus in his service with the Kingdom of God.)