

## CHRIST THE KING – 22 NOV 2020

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Comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable – is an advice I received at theological training - about preaching. Jesus adopted that approach in his ministry. By expressing **his** opinions and **his** interpretations of scripture and scripture's influence on life - he was comforting the disturbed and disturbed the comfortable – That sometimes got him into very sticky situations, confusing the listeners, and agitating the authorities. Eventually he found himself nailed to a cross that ended his life. Did I say he ended his life? The feast of Christ the King that we celebrate today, refutes that finality of the life of Jesus. He didn't end his life - but rose again and reigns as the God of existence who defeated death - the last enemy of life. After nearly 2000yrs, this same Jesus, **continues** to comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable - through the very words attributed to him in the ancient Gospels.

Today's parable is another Kingdom related parable. The New Testament writers have summarised the belief that in Jesus Christ the Kingdom of God had already arrived and unleashed. Although not in the manner that mainstream Judaism expected. They expected a geographical parcel of land promised for God's people the Jews. But, the Kingdom of God initiated by Jesus was a kingdom of the heart, a kingdom without geographical borders, a kingdom that included people of other nations and other races. If it was the physical geographical kingdom of the Jews – the Romans who governed the land did not like Jesus. If it was the Spiritual kingdom of the heart the Jewish leadership didn't like Jesus. Today we and the world are the beneficiaries of God's Kingdom without geographical boundaries because it is a kingdom of the heart.

It may be helpful for us to read this parable from this wider inclusive and universal perspective. <sup>35</sup>*'I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup> I was naked (without clothing) and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'* could be 'pleasant' thoughts to **anyone** - who **remember being** consoled in **their** distress. it could also be 'pleasant' thoughts for the care givers who

provided the consolation. Can I disturb you by commenting that these care givers need not necessarily be Christians?

The Greek word for 'Nation' in this parable – is 'ethnos' from which we get the reference to ethnic people. In the Kingdom of the heart - these words of Jesus could also be uplifting for people of other faiths, or no faith and to the numerous non-churchgoing members in our community - who also respond to human grief with their love and compassion. .... Many non-churchgoing members in our community - do not claim to be Christians, or to be church goers or even to be God believers. But in their own way - to the hungry they gave food, to the thirsty they gave water, they saw a human need and responded spontaneously and unpretentiously. Their humane endeavours are often not remembered. Are they recorded in the heart of Christ the King? 'Jesus, we didn't do it for you. We didn't even believe in you. We just did it.' – 'no – you did it for me.' ..... People of other faiths can say – we too have been caring for the distressed. I as a Hindu or Buddhist or Moslem or of another philosophy - have been actively involved in providing care and comfort to the traumatised. Their benevolent deeds often go unnoticed by Christians. But, will they be recorded in the heart of Jesus? 'Jesus, we didn't do it for you. We didn't even believe in you. We just did it.' .....

Caring for the vulnerable is a fundamental component in the teachings of every major religion. From within their religious traditions or no religion, it may be difficult for them to accept the Christian belief that Christ is the King of life! But according to the parable doesn't a surprise await them?

When Christ the King glances his eyes over the church – and looks at all our achievements and attempts at responding to the hurts and agonies of the people – and says – 'concerning your care for the needy - We in the Divine Sphere - as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, - we are very happy and pleased with you' – we too can derive some satisfaction. .... 'Lord we didn't realise we are doing it for you. We just did it'. **It is good to, affirm and acknowledge this imaginary flattery** ..... because some of our Anglican prayers can drag us into a vortex of unenthusiastic negativity. – When especially we go on repeating week after week – 'we haven't loved you and we haven't loved our neighbours'. .... Where are those moments when we can pray and say – 'Lord, we are attempting to love you with

our whole heart; and attempting to love our neighbours as ourselves' Or 'God, I am not perfect, but, I am doing the best I can – I am giving it a go at loving you and loving my neighbours'. A positive yet humble, self-appreciation won't hurt. It can help to offset a false sense of humility that seems to be delicately attached to Anglican spirituality. The Anglican Liturgical purists might not like to hear that. Am I disturbing the comfortable?

Now, ..... there seems to be an interesting twist in the words of Jesus in this parable! Which seems to suggest that there is more to the story than just caring for the needy.

Christ the King addresses 'all the nations ' and tells them, **“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me”** in V<sup>40</sup>. The question is - who then are the 'least of these who are members of my family'? ..... Commentators say that this gospel was written by Luke in the context of a persecuted church. Christians were in prison. Christians were the traumatised, hurt and wounded. – The ethnics were people who comforted and cared for the Christians when the Christians were hurt and traumatised! 'Jesus, we didn't do it for you. We just did it.'

While travelling through a small town on my parish motorbike in Sri Lanka, I skidded onto the side of an oncoming passenger bus and fell, on a wet and rainy day. The people nearby and passengers from the bus gathered around me. I raised myself up, in my muddied white cassock. I was a sorry sight and a symbol of utter embarrassment. I reassured everyone that I was OK. A family nearby invited me inside their home to calm me down and insisted I have a cup of coffee. Sheepishly but with deep gratitude I walked in. **They were a Moslem family.** Picture this - Here was a Christian Priest embarrassed in muddied Anglican robes - being cared for by a Moslem family. This is one of the millions of examples from around the world, that invites the Christian believers to appreciate the spontaneous and proactive love and compassion of people

who don't belong to the church but might belong to the Kingdom or the heart of God.

Although we have lived beyond early persecution history, religious persecution, vicious ethnic prejudices and genocidal activities have and continues to dot the landscape of history and hurting many. But dispersed and blooming brightly among them, are the acts of justice, compassion and kindness of Christians and people of other beliefs who became healers in a wounded world. The many challenges of NAIDOC week sit well within those journeys of hurt and healing.

In a broken world of broken people, this parable encourages us to generate a purpose filled roadmap. On that roadmap, we are invited to accommodate others who walk the same talk. The universal nature of proactive love and sincere compassion cannot be owned, and dominated by Christians or the politicised Christian world. One of the complaints from non- Christians is that – 'Christians don't know how to respect us!' ..... Am I disturbing the comfortable?

The Kingdom of God, initiated by Christ is already here as a journey although not fully realised as the destination. When Jesus prayed - 'let your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven', the destination and the journey seems to come together and merge at the same time. Christ the King invites us to embrace his Kingdom as an earthy journey rather than a preoccupation with a futuristic destination. **The future will look after you – if you look after the present.** As a king of love, a shepherd king, and a wounded healer - He is urging us to work with him and in his power - to make **this** world a better world and make someone's world - a better world for them! ..... If the Kingdom of God is an otherworldly desire, wonder why we encourage our Christian young people to study or seek higher education to become tradies and doctors and teachers and engineers and many more. Heaven doesn't need them – earth does. .... Heaven is a place of peace let us, bring peace. Heaven is a place where there no sadness, sickness, pain, hunger, thirst and hurt. Let us help the world enjoy healing. Heaven restores the original creation. Let us

contribute towards the restoration of our earth. Hand in hand with numerous others, and with mutual respect and appreciation - let us help Christ demonstrate his kingdom here on earth. Let us fulfil the intentions of the Lord's prayer – Let your Kingdom come on earth.

Christ our King let us be your humble and excited servants.