

Views from the Pews: The Feast of Christ the King

For Christians, the Kingdom of God is wherever Christ is acknowledged as “King”, and the last five items in my Kingdom series have been leading up to celebrating this feast, on the last Sunday of the church year. In the northern hemisphere, the magnificence of this day is reflected in the scarlet and gold of the autumn trees. Here in New Zealand it is a festival of the early summer, when gardens are ablaze with multicoloured flowering shrubs like rhododendrons and azaleas.

We regard Christ as eternally and everywhere present among us (or in our midst). But to children, the idea of a Kingdom implies a place where the King is resident. Years ago, Shirley and I worshipped at a small Baptist church tucked in the Waitakere ranges near one of the great dams that supply Auckland with fresh water. One Sunday after church, our young son (aged about 5 at the time) asked, “Dad, is the church really God’s house?” A bit taken aback at his early foray into ecclesiology, I mumbled something like “Yes..., yes I suppose it is.” To which he immediately responded, “Well how come whenever we go there, he is not home?” I can’t recall my answer. How did one explain to a child that the “Church” was the people and not the building? Particularly as I knew what his next question would be. “But there are lots of people. Which one does he live in?”

However, I have to admit, his question was rather thought provoking. It seems to me, given the gaps in my own knowledge, that people have always been preoccupied by their attempts to discover God’s location. Just “where is the Kingdom of God?” we want to know.

In ancient times, people believed that their gods were territorial, so had power only in certain places. During the Exile, when the people of Judah were forcibly removed to Babylon, they realised that God had not been left behind, but was “wherever they were”. The presence of his people was the key factor, not the physical location. Over time, Christians have defined themselves (and thus the Kingdom of God) as being wherever God was regarded as sovereign, even if unnoticed by those who do not accept him as King. The Kingdom of God thus permeates all of reality, and Christians believe it will eventually **BE** all of reality. Halleluyah!!

Phil Wilson