

CV 38 Thought for the Day –Sunday before Advent, Christ the King

Evensong readings:-

by

2 Samuel Ch.23, vv1-7

Didymus

Matthew Ch.28, vv16-end.

This, the last Sunday in the Church year, was the 24th Sunday in the long trail from Trinity to Advent, but more recently has become the feast of Christ the King. This was introduced in 1925 by the RC Church to celebrate the limitless authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, and from 1970 it was adopted by the Anglican Church. I would not be true to my pseudonym if I did not remark this this was somewhere between redundancy and tautology, since all my sixty-odd years of being taught by sermon and study, that Jesus was the human face of God possessing his infinite powers, as his miracles demonstrated. The cynic, never far from my shoulder, reminds me that for some, when the RC church catches a cold, we sneeze.

So let us remember our Lord, and his promise, perhaps the most important in the Bible, recorded at the end of Matthew's Gospel in the words of William Tyndale and Myles Coverdale: ***“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”***



November 22nd is also the day when we remember a minor saint, St.Cecilia. I think that “minor” is a bit harsh, for Cecilia and her family must have suffered horribly in their martyrdom. Cecilia is the patron saint of musicians and music. At the present time, we feel the lack of music in our worship particularly keenly. I feel that far too little attention is paid to St.Cecilia, perhaps because her story has probably been somewhat corrupted. Her remains were discovered and placed in a church which bears her name in Trastevere in Rome.

Think about it – a world with no music? Unimaginable, quite unimaginable. From the symphonies of Schubert and Beethoven, through the concerti, the opera, the great religious works, on to the spirituals of Africa and America, the emergence of bands to dance to, to jazz, popular music, musical comedy, we have a feast of music to please all tastes. It excites us, it calms us, it lifts us, it charms us, moves us to tears, and it even comforts us. Music also defines us, as our tastes are all different, even if only slightly. I swing from grand opera to traditional jazz, but with the sounds of “The Trout”, Rachmaninov, Gershwin, Gounod, Glenn Miller – one has to pause even from writing these thoughts to give thanks for the geniuses that perceived a melody, put it into playable form, and for the great army of

musicians who strive to play with accuracy and meaning.

Remarkably, wonderful compositions are still being written. I remember hearing the “St.Jude's Choir” singing Sir Karl Jenkins' “Armed Man” mass for peace in church for the first time. As the music was sung it was clear that here was something special, but when I heard the



Benedictus for the first time, it was almost heart-stopping, so beautiful, encapsulating our worship and our love for Jesus Christ. It was quite stunning. Here is something odd. If you listen to the classical religious works, such as Gounod's Missa de Gloria, the requiems by Verdi and Fauré, it seems that the music for the Sanctus and the Benedictus has brought out a special inspiration from the composer. Certainly it did in Karl Jenkins' case.

In a curious way, the coincidence of the feast of St. Cecilia with the feast of Christ the King rings true. One of the strongest visions or impressions of the infinite majesty of Jesus comes in great music of whatever speaks to us.

I believe strongly that church music should not only encourage calm and reflective thought, but when the end of the service is near, it should be happy. If we are not happy about worship, being forgiven, hearing scripture and singing, why do we come to church? A friend sometimes would play Scott Joplin as the retiring voluntary, and the smiles on faces was good to see. I remember years ago when working at Waterloo, my colleague decided to change the music played over the public address system. In the morning we usually had military marches, and in the evening, Johann Strauss. Alan reversed the choice. The effect was quite startling, chaos in the morning peak with people struggling to get through the slow moving crowds, and again in the evening, now with people moving faster but changing direction as trains left before they reached the platform. It was a very surprising to see how the behaviour of people was affected. Alan changed back, quickly.

In our prayers let's remember to thank our Lord for, in his infinite love, the gift of music and the ability to enjoy it, for the gift of composers, musicians and all who make our world a brighter place to live in. Remember also that through this gift, we might feel the presence of him who created it.

AMEN

For those who know jazz as only the word that uses a spare "J" and two "Zs" in Scrabble, I have inserted a photo from a misspent youth in a jazz club. I don't remember them wearing suits, though, jeans, jumpers and no printed music.

