

Readings Ezekiel 34: 11-12, 15-17; Corinthians 15: 20-26, 28; Matthew 25: 31-46



Fr Michael says:

It is easy to confuse our understanding of kingship and not see what Jesus means by it. Ezekiel paints the picture of the King who is Shepherd, caring for His sheep. This Kingship is realised through suffering and death for us and the reality of the Resurrection points to our need to raise our sights and in the Gospel recognise where true Kingship is to be seen and exercised: the service of others – John in His Gospel puts the washing of the feet at the heart of Jesus' last meal and celebration with His disciples.

Even where conditions are better and basic needs are met, these words still apply, as Mother Teresa has put it: “The worst disease in the world today is the feeling of being unwanted, and the greatest evil is lack of love. What the poor need more than food and clothing and shelter – is to be wanted! Jesus words still echo forth to us and the need to help and support others.

We could translate Jesus words to the negligent in the Gospel like this: “I was hungry – but for a smile, a word of encouragement or appreciation instead of what I did receive, cold looks, criticism and denigration. I was thirsty for recognition, not being nagged at; for friendship – and I was ignored; companionship and it was refused. I was a stranger and you ignored me, I was a child whom you ignored because I was poorly dressed and so could not play with your children; a neighbour, but not of your class was I was left out. I was naked, because I had no self-worth and you would not encourage me; I had no self-confidence, because I had your disapproval I had my good name taken away because of a lie and you did not help me to get it back. You never noticed when I was sick with worry or doubt; or when I was disappointed in my failures, you did not help, but blamed me. I was a prisoner of loneliness, but you cold-shouldered me; depressed and all you did was blame me. I felt guilty and you would not release me through forgiveness. You left me out in the cold when I wanted tenderness and comfort; I needed sympathy and understanding and got the opposite; I looked for love and acceptance and you gave me nothing and I was locked out from you.” How good it would be to turn all these negatives into positives: we might spend time looking at some or other of these situations and see how we fare and how we might respond in a positive way: a challenge indeed! The criterion of success in our lives is how we show and share love.

As Mother Teresa puts it again: “Many today are starving for ordinary bread; there is, however, another kind of hunger – that of being wanted, love and recognised. Nakedness is not just want of clothes, but also the loss of dignity, purity and self-respect. Homelessness is more than just wanting a house, there is the homelessness of rejection, being unwanted and uncared for. Lord, warm our cold hearts with your grace, so that we your disciples may produce the fruits of love.”