

Christ the King 2025

I stand here in need of God's mercy and grace. May I speak in the name of the God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

In Switzerland, where I grew up, Epiphany is celebrated across the country, not just by church goers. For those of you who are looking at me puzzled, Epiphany is not today, but on the 6th of January and it marks the visit of baby Jesus by the magi. In Switzerland this day is therefore called Three-Kings-Day, and while here probably even quite a few church goers would not be aware of Epiphany, in Switzerland everyone would know about Three-Kings-Day, even if they are less likely to know what it is about.

The reason for this is the tradition of Three-Kings-Cakes. This 'cake' is a sweet bread, made up of differing numbers of little buns stuck together. Inside one of these little buns is hidden a little king. We usually had one of these Three-King-Cakes in school and whoever ended up with the king had the power to for example choose what game we would play in the next PE class. At home, we would also share such a Three-Kings-Cake and in our family, whoever got the king had the power to decide what we would have for a special dinner the following weekend.

These traditions capture well the fairy tale understanding of what a king is: A king is someone who has the power to decide and everyone has to do exactly as the king says. Today, as the church marks Christ as the King, it is a very important question to ask, what kind of king Jesus

Christ is. Is Jesus the kind of king we know from fairy tales, who has the power to decide and everyone has to obey or else?

I would say that today's gospel reading very much suggests Jesus must be quite a different kind of king to the kings in fairy tales. This king hangs helplessly on a cross, slowly dying. People are mocking him, calling out:

'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!'

But Jesus doesn't. Jesus doesn't save himself. Instead, he dies, pathetically, shamefully and slowly the torturous death on a cross. The inscription about his head about him being the king of the Jewish people looks like a very bad joke or undeniable proof that whatever kind of king Jesus might have been, this king certainly had no real power.

What kind of king is Jesus? If Jesus is the Son of God, if Jesus is God, why does God die pathetically on a cross? What kind of puny king, what kind of puny god is this?

Jesus is no fairy tale king. Jesus is a very different kind of king. Jesus, as the Son of God, has the power to decide and to make all the world do as he says. But Jesus decides not to protect himself from the human beings who are afraid of him, whom he makes uncomfortable and even blindly furious. When Jesus was arrested, when Jesus was unjustly accused and put through a sham show trial, Jesus could have fought back. Jesus could have started the war to end all wars. Jesus could have fought back and started a massive bloodbath.

But that is not the kind of king Jesus is, because that is not the kind of kingdom that God's Kingdom is. God's will for creation and all human beings is the flourishing of all. God's will is for peace, justice and equity. God's will is for all to have enough of what they need, a safe home, enough food, clean water, life-giving community. Starting the war to end all wars would absolutely not have achieved any of that.

So Jesus chooses a different way. Jesus decides to let all that hatred and fear do its worst to the point of his death. And by doing so he overcomes death when he is risen to new life on Easter morning. Jesus overcame our greatest enemy, death itself. And so, Jesus truly proved himself as the true king of God's Kingdom of peace, justice and equity. Jesus is truly Christ the King, but not at all in the way of fairy tale kings.

Jesus is not the kind of king that uses his power to decide to force everyone else to do as he likes. Jesus uses his power to again and again find ways to make God's Kingdom become a reality in small and great ways, be it by feeding thousands of people with just a few loaves and fish, by healing the sick, sharing meals with the outcasts or overcoming death by dying on a cross.

And Jesus invites us to follow his example in small ways. We do not hold the power of God's Son, who is able to overcome even death, but we all hold some power and as Christians we are called to try one day at a time to use what power we have to make God's Kingdom become a reality in small and great ways. If you have the power to vote in this country, it is worth reflecting on how your vote could do that in a small way. If you

have the financial power to buy food, you could think if you could share some of that food with others. If you are a parent, how can you use the power you have over your children's lives in ways that help them flourish now and in the future? If you have people working under you or people depend on services you provide at work, how can you use that power to let God's Kingdom become a little more real for them? What kinds of power do you hold and how can you use that power in a way that follows the example of Christ the King?
Amen.