

Luke 23:33-43

The Palm Sunday procession is surely the best place to start if you are looking for Christ the King. He enters the city triumphantly with everyone clamouring after Him. Those who had other pretensions to power are left awe struck. He came in humility on that day, but He taught with an authority unheard of.

Yet, to discover the sort of King he really was you must come to the foot of the cross and that is where this morning's Gospel reading takes us.

Here is a passage I have read many times, just as you will have. But what struck me as I read it afresh this time was the number of times those present at the crucifixion uttered the same cry. "Save yourself."

The bystanders sneered at him with these words and added, "He saved others, but he cannot save himself."

The soldiers mocked him with the same words, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself."

One of the criminals who hung beside him hurled insults at Jesus picking up the same chant, "Save yourself and us."

I wonder what lay behind this mantra.

If Jesus truly had the power to heal and save, why could He not just turn the miracle on Himself?

Or was it more insidious than this?

That everyone who wielded power in those days would be expected to look after themselves before turning their attentions to the needs of others. The notion of a king who put others first astonished them.

We live in days exactly like these. Where the preservation of self often comes first.

People cling to their reputations and positions at all costs and wait to see if they will be vindicated or if, inevitably, everything will come tumbling down,

As always, Jesus turns the assumed status quo on its head. He shows the full stature of His Kingdom by not only putting others first but also at the expense of His own life.

It is a tall order to expect us to do the same. We would rather follow the triumphant Palm Sunday procession than the limping band that hobbled their way to Calvary.

As we approach the season of Advent, we will encounter a succession of characters who begin to demonstrate the nature of that kingship even before the saviour himself was born.

Listen to the stories of John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary, to name but two, and consider the impact of their stories looked at alongside the life of the saviour they had come to announce.

With love
Fr Andrew