



Topsy turvy

Caroline Hodgson *reflects on* Jeremiah 23:1-6, Colossians 1:11-20 and Luke 23:33-43

"I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king". Today, the last Sunday of the Church's year, we celebrate the fulfilment of the promise related in Jeremiah.

Our reading from Luke is one of the most upsetting accounts of the crucifixion – a strange choice, you might think, for a day that celebrates Christ's kingship. Yet on closer examination there is both warning and encouragement here, as Jesus reveals his kingship in his death on the cross. Implicit in the choice of this reading for today, then, is a warning not to become over-sentimental in the coming seasons of Advent and Christmas – because the child in the manger is also the man upon the cross.

Strangely, this is encouraging, as it is evidence of God's topsy-turvy kingdom on earth. While the world strives for fame, success and wealth, God measures things differently – "Many who are first will be last, and the last will be first", says Matthew (19:30). You cannot get more last than a crucified, rejected man, yet Christ's glory and kingship are seen on the cross, in the ultimate sacrifice he made for humankind.

Today's reading from Colossians brings together these apparently contradictory aspects of today's readings, revealing Christ the King in all his glory: "through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross". ☺

Lord Jesus, Christ the King, as we prepare to celebrate your birth, remind us not to get carried away by the glitter and glitz. Help us to remember the man upon the cross, and keep us encouraged by your topsy-turvy kingdom. Amen.

The creeds

Kathryn Fleming concludes her series about the Christian creeds.

Perhaps, instead of reciting the Creed in worship, we could affirm the Beatitudes and thus commit ourselves to pursue "orthopraxy" – right living – in place of orthodoxy – right belief. That might well seem more attractive, shifting the emphasis away from the God we strain to understand, to our

own patterns of fallible human behaviour. It could change the Church overnight! But that's not the point. We need our creeds, building blocks of faith and liturgy, that unite us week by week with the Church, stretching through space and time. The Creed we recite together is part of the great eucharistic act – the thanksgiving we offer God as we proclaim our glimpses of God's nature, our celebration of God's action, and our declaration of ourselves as people shaped by our relationship with God and defined by the words that we profess. ☺

"Pride is often used as a way to protect our hearts and to hide the truth. Pride causes us to shut down and build walls."

Heather Bixler, blogger and author

Walking with Poppy

Harnessed

by Gillian Cooper

Poppy now has to go walking in a harness not a collar – vet's orders! She has always hated having anything round her, so getting her to tolerate the harness has been a challenge, but we are making progress. She still backs away when the harness appears, but as

soon as it is on she is off out of the door and along the path, almost as if she is saying, "OK, if I have to wear this thing, let's get on with it."

Poppy has no choice about the limitations she lives with. But Jesus did. Before he was the "Christ the King" we celebrate today, he was born as the vulnerable baby we will remember in a few weeks' time. He got on with the job of being human, the best human we have ever seen, even to the point of suffering a human death, to free us from our harnesses of sin and mortality. ☺

Church of Scotland: Orphir and Stenness Parish

Interim Moderator: Rev June Freeth 721449

Locum Minister Rev Martin Prentice

Session Clerk: Nicol 811242

There is a loop system. Adjust hearing aids to benefit.

A warm invitation is extended to everyone to meet in the hall at the back of the church, after the service, for a cup of tea.

Intimations

Mon 25th Nov 7pm Meeting in the kirk hall for anyone interested in providing pastoral care

Tues 26th Nov - 7pm - 8pm – Fellowship in the kirk hall.

Tues 26th Nov - 8pm – Choir in the kirk hall

Thurs 28th Nov – 10am – 12noon Community Café in the kirk hall

Sunday 1st Dec - 11.15am Communion

- 2.30pm St Peter's

Saturday 14th Dec

For Christmas, the windows will display a Christmas flower arrangement. If you'd like to lead/do a window arrangement, please speak to Kathryn. The kirk will be open on 14th December to complete the arrangements (No lilies to be used, please.)

Sunday 15th Dec – 7pm - Christmas Concert in the Kirk

Friday 20th Dec – School Service in the Kirk

Sunday 22nd Dec – Christmas Service

Tuesday 24th Dec – 11.15pm for 11.30pm – Watchnight Service

Readings: Jeremiah 23: 1-6 Luke 23: 33-43

Hymns

392 "When I survey the wondrous cross"

449 "Rejoice the Lord is King"

511 "Your hand O God has guided"

702 "Lord in Love and perfect wisdom"

462 "The King of Love my shepherd is"

Jeremiah 23: 1-6 - Those in authority sometimes, and perhaps all too often, end up destroying and scattering the very ones they are expected to care for. Instead of 'leading their people to safety' those in authority sometimes desert them and drive them to destruction. Are those in authority, even today, always behaving as responsible 'shepherds'? Jeremiah rebukes elites who abuse their roles of power, while giving comfort to those who have suffered at their hands. The 'Righteous Branch' is one of many biblical names describing attributes of God. 'Righteous' also means to be morally upright, without guilt or sin. Of course, it is impossible to live up to God's standards, so what does this mean for Christians? It means that it is Jesus who imparts His righteousness to those who, through their faith in Him, believe. 'The Lord is Our Righteousness' (v.6). There is a pledge to 'pour out judgment on the evil that leaders have done' and still do. Jeremiah's prophetic expectation is of the coming of a messiah who, having delivered God's people from their oppressors and gathered them to be united and in safety, rules as the Shepherd-King. It is those with and through faith, and especially the shepherding elites among us, who must – be wise, just and righteous – for Jesus sake.

Doxology Hymn 786

May the God of peace go with us, as we travel from this place

May the love of Jesus keep us firm in hope and full of grace.