

Now, I'm sure that there are many people here today who are avid followers of the Netflix series, *The Crown*. I've never seen it myself, not because I'm not a fan of the Royals, rather that I think I'd be disturbed by some of the inaccuracies that there are in that series. I do regularly have to remind people that it's not actually a documentary. The title *The Crown* refers to the institution of the monarchy. But of course, crown has a more particular meaning. It's the headwear worn by a king or a queen, a monarch. And in the coronation of the British monarchy, the moment of coronation when the crown is placed on the head of the new king or queen by the Archbishop of Canterbury is the very heart of the service. And on this feast day of Christ the King, I want to reflect on what the Bible says about crowns because there are in fact many references to crowns throughout scripture.

In the book of Revelation, Jesus is described as a heavenly king wearing many crowns. And we've sung hymns about crowning Jesus as king of kings. We'll be singing later the wonderful hymn, "Crown Him With Many Crowns", which has the descant in the final verse, "crown him the Lord of heaven, enthroned in worlds above". The Book of Revelation talks of Jesus as Lord of Lord and king of kings, a refrain we'll hear gloriously put to music in our anthem, "Lord of Lords and King of Kings". St. Paul writes in Ephesians that Jesus was, after he was raised from the dead, he was "seated at the father's right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named. Not only in this age, but in the age to come." St. Paul there conjures up this vivid image of Jesus, the Lord of heaven, king of kings, enthroned in the worlds above.

And the feast of Christ the King is the last week of our liturgical year, the church's year. Next Sunday is Advent Sunday, and the liturgical year begins again. And over the course of this year, we trace Jesus' birth at Christmas, his baptism at Epiphany, his temptation in the wilderness, in Lent his crucifixion and resurrection at Easter, his ascension, his sending of the Spirit at Pentecost. And as we worship Christ our King, on this final

Sunday of the church's year, we're reminded that all the preceding Sundays and all the preceding holy days reveal Jesus as he truly is the Lord of Lords, the king of kings who lived a life amongst us. Jesus Christ is our king.

At the coronation of King Charles III in Westminster Abbey, the King was crowned with St. Edward's crown, which is such a special crown that it only leaves the Tower of London to be put on a new monarch's head. So, it's only left the tower 17 times since it was made in 1661. It weighs five pounds, and it has 444 precious stones. Jesus our king, only wore one crown during his life, a crown of thorns, a crudely made crown that placed upon his head at his crucifixion. Jesus was a different type of king.

We see that in our gospel reading. We're celebrating here today, Jesus as king, the feast of Christ the King. So, what reading do we get? Do we get Jesus in dazzling white transfigured on the Holy Mount? Do we get him at his baptism perhaps with a divine voice announcing him? Do we get a particularly miraculous miracle? No, we don't get any reference to Jesus in any of these majestic guises in our gospel reading for today. Instead, what we read in our gospel was a picture of Jesus at his emotional and physical worse, arrested, disheveled, harassed, hungry, abandoned, sleep-deprived and standing before the notoriously cruel Pontius Pilate. If I were going to write a gospel for today depicting Jesus as king, it wouldn't be anything like that.

Our king in our gospel is an arrested, falsely accused criminal, a dead man walking. His chosen path to glory is humility, surrender, brokenness and loss. Jesus is an unusual type of king and the leader of an upside-down kingdom. Earthly kings boast in their power and strength, not in their humiliation and suffering. And it's a great paradox of Jesus's kingship that the true nature and wonder and glory of his kingship is revealed on the cross. The irony is present at Jesus's crucifixion. Pilate ordered that a sign be written and placed above his head on the cross, mocking him. "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

Pilate intended an irony in that description, but the irony is greater than he could ever have imagined because we see on the cross, Jesus crucified. Pilate was writing the truth. The man hanging on that cross was indeed a king, king of all, not just king of Israel, king of the entire world. Christ's rule is known to us, not from a royal throne like every other king, but from a cross. And we're reminded of that wonderful fact each week as we gather in church in front of a huge Christus Rex above our altar. And what we see there is Jesus crucified and crowned.

Jesus is the king not only in moments when he is exalted and hailed as Lord of all creation, Jesus is king too in his lowly suffering and death, a death he underwent for our sake, revealing that he's not just a king with power and authority. We worship the king of love, the greatest love of all. And there's a final crown I'd like to mention before I finish, and it's a crown that St. Paul mentions in his first letter to the Corinthians. He talks there about athletes training for games because St. Paul was familiar with the games that were the precursor of our Olympic Games, and he knew athletes who were trained and go into a very disciplined regime so that they could win the prize at the games, and the prize they won, the winner was given a crown made of olive leaves that they wore proudly on their head.

And Paul compares that with the followers of Jesus, the subjects of Jesus' kingdom. He said, "You too will wear a crown, but it's an imperishable crown." He said, the athletes train and are disciplined to win a crown of olives. We are people who should train and be disciplined in our following of King Jesus because we are striving not after a crown that will perish, but we strive after an imperishable crown in eternity. So, on this festival of Christ the King, we not only celebrate the unusual kingship of Jesus, we also remember that we, his subjects will one day wear an imperishable crown in his eternal kingdom.

Amen.