

Tonight we have two lots of last words.
The last words of King David before he died
and the last words of Jesus before he ascended.

First these words of David.

Verse 1 - David reflects on who he is
the man exalted by the Most High
the man anointed by the God of Jacob
Israel's singer of songs.

He knows he is a great King
but only because God **made** him great.
All his gifts, his skills, his wisdom
are God-given, God-anointed;
to be used for God's purposes;
and we know he strove to do just that.
He had his weak moments, his bad days;
but his heart was for God.

And he remembers a particular gift -
Israel's singer of songs -
not just a singer, but he wrote his own material!
And that too was God's anointing.

Even today, we benefit from that ministry of David
the rich legacy of the Psalms.

So he was a God-made man
and a god-gifted man.

David's last words
Jesus' last words

Last before Advent
(Christ the King)

2 Samuel 23. 1 - 7
Matthew 28. 16 - 20

He remembers, verse 2,
a particular prophetic insight God gave him
about kingship.

*When one rules over men in righteousness,
when he rules in the fear of God,
he is like the light of morning at sunrise,
on a cloudless morning,
like the brightness after rain
that brings the grass from the earth.*

A lovely picture -

It is poetic and idealistic
but this is what good kingship should be like.
Beautiful and refreshing.

And then he claims, verse 5, or perhaps wishes,
and commends this to his son Solomon
that this was what his own reign was like.

Is not my own house right with God? ...

and he remembers God's promise
that if his descendants continue to live
by God's ordinances and commands
then they will reign forever
as God's anointed kings.

And this is the Messianic hope we see fulfilled in Jesus

But if his descendants are wicked
and do not live by God's laws
they will be like thorns. Another picture - metaphor
Just as people do not handle thorns
because they prick and hurt
so God will not hold such wicked people
but will have them put aside for burning.

These are prophecies about David's descendants that we know came true.

For a short while, David's descendants were good kings like Solomon - and they kept God's laws.

But before long, they became wicked and the monarchy came to an end.

When Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians the last of the Royal House were put to death, or taken into exile, and there was no king on the throne.

So Jesus, and the gospels establish that he was of David's line, was the restoration of a monarchy that was lost and the restoration of a promise that was lost.

In Jesus, the sinless Son of David, is the one uniquely able to fulfil the promise and to be God's King who will reign forever.

And so Jesus is the one who fulfils David's description whose reign is "like the light of morning at sunrise, on a cloudless morning," etc.
A reign that is beautiful and refreshing

David's words, intended to be an encouragement and a warning to Solomon turn out to be beautiful and prophetic about Jesus.

And today it is Jesus we remember on the last Sunday of the year, before Advent, the festival of Christ the King, God's King. God's promise fulfilled.

Now almost every page of Scripture seems to speak about Jesus, Christ the King. Certainly every page of the New Testament does.

But if we are looking particularly for some reference to his coming Kingdom the end of Matthew seems a good place.

This is just before the ascension - when Jesus was re-enthroned as King.

Jesus speaks to his Eleven about authority. Luke records in Acts 1 that Jesus used his forty days to speak about the Kingdom of God.

In our reading in Matthew we see the disciples unsure still
verse 17 - Jesus appeared to them at Galilee
*When they saw him, they worshipped him
but some doubted.*

That's to be expected - to worship the man Jesus went against all they had been taught for thousands of years.

But the evidence was overwhelming, and the ascension put the seal on it for all of them.

And what does Jesus do with this mixed bag of disciples who both believe and doubt? He commissions them with authority. He vests them with his kingship!

Isn't that comforting?
Who does God look for to be his kingdom?
ordinary people -
who are not yet complete in their faith.

And it is the same today.

You and I may not be perfect in our faith.
We may not yet be perfect in our holiness.

But we too are called to receive "All authority"

This Great Commission, is very carefully worded.
The Eleven are sent to make disciples of every nation.
They are to teach those disciples
to do everything Jesus commanded the Eleven.
It makes a continuous loop.
So the process continues
in every generation of Christians.

And every generation has the same full authority
as that first generation.

They / we are commissioned
to preach, to heal, and to cast our demons.
To do everything necessary to bring in God's Kingdom.

And I know it gets boring
every time I preach, to say, "Mission, mission, mission".
But here in Jesus' last words, again we are reminded
this is the task of those in the Kingdom -
to extend the Kingdom, by telling others.

I sometimes say that every sermon I preach
should contain just the one message,
the same message every time
the good news of God's grace.

God's grace, his forgiveness for sinners,
is exactly in Luke's version, what we are to preach.
Luke 24.46f

*This is what is written:
The Christ will suffer
and rise from the dead on the third day,*

That's Easter

*and repentance and forgiveness of sins
will be preached in his name to all nations,
beginning at Jerusalem.*

You are witnesses of these things.

That is the ongoing life and mission of the church

Yes, we are to enjoy being together.

But also, we must go out to tell others.
And our message is God's grace -
the cross and the resurrection,
repentance and forgiveness of sins.
And this is to be preached to every nation.

So as we look now to begin these weeks of
preparation for Christmas - the birth of a Saviour
we must renew our resolve to be God's authority
and to be God's message.
to extend God's kingdom
Or Christmas will be meaningless
and Advent just a church season, with no significance.

David's last words - Jesus' last words
can't you feel the urgency?

And yet for the most part
while acknowledging the need **for** mission,
we are not driven by the gospel imperative,
(Go and make disciples)
and those who are, evangelist and missionaries
may have our admiration,
but they are still an embarrassment when among us.

Here then is something to pray for Advent
that I, and you, might catch this gospel imperative.

Matthew ends with

*I am with you always
even to the end of the age.*

It echoes the beginning of the gospel Matt. 1. 23

*He shall be called 'Emmanuel'
'God with us'*

And it follows his name "Jesus".
Christmas is not just about
God making his home on the earth;
"Jesus" means "God saves"
it is about the birth of a Saviour.

And he calls us to complete his work
and call others into his kingdom.

Advent is "Wake up" time.
God calls us to work.