

Christ the King 2018 Revelation 1v4b-8, John 18v33-37

Jesus answered Pilate "My Kingdom is not of this world".

I read these words just before going to a Harry Potter Themed Wedding in the Tree House in the grounds of Alnwick Castle last Sunday.

The venue was chosen because the Bride in particular, is a great Harry Potter fan. Alnwick Castle being the place where some of the earlier Harry Potter stories were filmed. The Brides bouquet and the Bridesmaids flowers, as well as the Bridegroom and Best Man's buttonholes were composed of paper roses printed with sections from Harry Potter books. The Wedding Favours included Chocolate frogs, and we each had our own 'Snitch' made from a gold foil covered Ferrero Rochet chocolate, with added 'wings'.

Does the fictional 'world' of Harry Potter have anything at all to do with the 'Kingdom' that Jesus was referring to when he said "My Kingdom is not of this world?"

Yes, or at least 'perhaps' it does. Though not as much as in the fictional Chronicles of Narnia.

I confess that I don't know too much about the World of Harry Potter and Hogwarts, but at a very basic level, the books seem to me to be about an ongoing battle between good and evil, and eventually the good overcoming that evil.

In 'The Last Battle', the 7th in the C S Lewis Chronicles of Narnia series, we can read about all kinds of imagined creatures. Talking beasts, Dwarfs, Satyrs, Fauns, Giants, Calormenes, men from Archenland, Monopods, and 'strange unearthly things' from the remote island of the unknown Western lands.

They all, very near the end of the book, rushed to Aslan. Some passing by on his left and others on his right side. Through the door, and then the sea rose from the Eastern end of the world, and the sun began to die as the Old Narnia passed away.

Where they then found themselves to be - was the 'real Narnia'. The other had been 'only a shadow - or copy' of Aslan's Real World. More real, more beautiful than the one they had previously known.

Maybe it will feel like this - when the whole created order Worships at Jesus' feet, and He rules over all things as Lord and King. After the final day of judgement, when this, the old world has passed away.

Today we look forward to that day, when Christ is King of the new heaven and new earth, and we are with him, part of His Kingdom forever.

But for now, we live between the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. And we see painful evidence of this present world in turmoil and its people suffering.

Things are changing in the world with the effects of climate change, things are changing here and in Europe with the possibility of Brexit.

Sadly, even the word 'Paradise' has lost some of its appeal since the recent and almost total

destruction of the settlement of that name, with accompanying images from the Californian forest fires imprinted on our minds.

Through all these changes Jesus remains the 'faithful witness' to the truth about God. And we are called to be Christlike. Called to be the Priesthood of believers, who serve God on behalf of others. Recognising that God is in control, no matter how frightening the power of earthly rulers seems to be.

Being reminded that 'Christ is King' can bring some measure of relief, hope and encouragement to us to continue to proclaim that 'to God belongs the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory'.

Like in the Harry Potter books and the Chronicles of Narnia, there is a battle going on. There always has been, and there will continue to be until the final judgement day. A battle between good and evil, both on the earth and in the heavens.

In Jesus' day the Roman Empire was a totalitarian Regime with oppressive tyranny, and such regimes still exist in the world.

The Power of evil still has its servants who are able to inflict terrible suffering on the faithful. Power is abused by many, at every level of society.

Today there is a battle to be fought over 'freedom of speech' and the silencing of radical ideas, and the question of 'how the proclamation of the Gospel and the encouragement of godly living, might be viewed'.

For us, this battle can be on a personal level - involving all that we do and say. We want to say and do the right things, but can find that the opposite happens all too easily.

Bishop James' recent teaching days entitled 'What is human?', were based on the questions:- 'Who am I?' 'Why am I here?' and 'Where am I going?', and he spoke of some concerning situations.

There is a battle going on over what is taught in our schools about gender identification, sexuality and relationships.

There are ethical dilemmas regarding cloning, complex transplants and designer babies. Accepting and welcoming 'every' advancement in pioneering surgery, genetic engineering, gender re-designation or Artificial Intelligence technology, could be detrimental in the long run.

Yet challenging, or sometimes even seeking to have an open discussion about anything, may be received as coming from a place of hostility or even rejection. Especially if people are feeling vulnerable.

It is a strange world that we find ourselves in today.

People who struggle with their own identity may seek to find solace in creating a computer-generated image of the self they want to be. Avatars and 'their worlds' become new battle

grounds to rival that of Harry Potter World, Narnia, and the events described in the book of Revelation, or in the books of Daniel and Zechariah.

New 'Simulated' worlds can be created it seems, without any inbuilt underlying references to God's Kingdom values, or to a Universal central figure of goodness, with powers that are not of 'that world' and pointing forward to a day of Judgement, Mercy and Grace.

At every turn there seems to be a battle raging between God and the power of evil. Yet 'we know' that the Victory has already been won, through Christ's sacrificial death and Resurrection. Christ is the one who was. And who is, and who is to come. Whose Kingdom – is 'not of this world'.

Through our study of God's Word, the confession of our failings, the washing away of our sins, and the receiving of forgiveness;
may we serve God on behalf of others, as we await Christ's return, and the full coming of His Kingdom. Amen.