

Today we are in the last Sunday after Pentecost and we celebrate this as the festival of "Christ the Lord" and the theme is "The good confession made by Jesus Christ."

The Old Testament reading taken from the book of Isaiah is part of a group of songs called the 'Servant songs'. These songs talk to us about the coming messiah who would establish truth and justice in the earth. This servant was chosen by God and God's Spirit was upon him as he would bring Justice to the nations. Interestingly the manner in which he will bring justice to the nations is in a very self-effacing way. He will not cry or lift up his voice or make himself heard in the street. His actions would not attract attention to himself but he will deliver justice. He would also be a compassionate servant who will not break a bruised reed or a dimly burning wick he will not quench. His effort will always be towards helping those who are broken in spirit, those who are oppressed and feel that their lives are ebbing out. He will encourage and sustain the people who are discouraged. As he ministers he himself will not fail nor be discouraged till he fulfils his purpose on earth. Jesus fulfills this testimony about the servant of God. In the original context the reference could have been either to Cyrus the king, or Israel as a nation. However, we see that this is quoted by Mathew in chap. 12:18-21, in fulfillment of Jesus' role.

Jesus is the one who will bring justice to the nations. His sacrificial death initiated the 'new covenant' through which sin is forgiven and all people would come to God. When Jesus began his ministry in Nazareth he used very similar language to that in Isaiah 42:7. His healing of physical ailments was a manifestation of his healing of a far deeper spiritual blindness. He was indeed the light of the world.

In John's gospel Jesus is on trial before Pilate and he is asked to whether he is the king of the Jews. Jesus acknowledges him by saying, "My kingdom is not of this world, if it were my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place." Pilate recognized that Jesus was a king though he was not able to understand the kingship of Jesus.

In the reading from the book of Revelation, John sees a vision of God seated on the throne holding a scroll written on both sides, sealed with seven seals. He sees an angel asking, 'Who is worthy to open this scroll and break its seals?' John found that there was no one in earth or in heaven to open this scroll or look into it and so he begins to weep. This vision builds up from chap. 4:8 which shows that the kingdom of God was to come on earth with all its power and might. He was given a glimpse of it in the war room and he is shown the events that have already taken place or is to take place.

So the question is whether anybody can be found to open this scroll. As John ponders on this question one of the elders tells John to weep no more because the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David had conquered the world and he can open the scrolls and the seven seals. John sees between the elders and the four creatures a Lamb standing as though it had been slain. The Lamb had seven horns, seven eyes which are symbols of power and wisdom. The Lion of the tribe of Judah is a messianic title alluding to Genesis 49:9. Mathew tracks both David and Jesus to the tribe of Judah. Jesus is the Lion of Judah. The second title used for Jesus is the Root of David. This is an allusion to Isaiah 11:1, 10 where it is used as the messianic title. This was to show that the messiah comes from David's descendants.

What has this Lion of Judah done? This Lion of Judah has conquered the world and so Paul talks about God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has defeated Satan and all his forces on the cross. He defeated death which was brought in by sin and by giving himself as a sacrifice for sins he conquered both sin and death. Therefore death has no more power over us. Death has been defeated. Jesus is the slain Lamb who has paid the price for our sins.

The Lamb took the scroll from God, and the living creatures and the 24 elders fall before the Lamb and they sang a new song, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and open its seals, you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language, people and nation and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth.' Just as the elders and living creatures and all the saints proclaim that Jesus the Lamb is worthy to be worshipped so too we are called to worship him. Christ is indeed the Lord of all and every knee shall bow and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord.