

## Christ the King

One of the consequences of this second lock-down for me has been the revelation of just how much rubbish there is on TV! I didn't turn the TV on at all during the first lock-down, possibly because it was Summer and light out, but now as it gets dark and I am tired of sitting in front of my computer all day I go and flop in front of the tele. Apparently I will watch any rubbish that is on, and most of it is rubbish, but a couple of fun gems are in there too. One of which is a silly fantasy series called Merlin. It's total nonsense of course, but it is cute and there is something very appealing about the idea of a noble king and brave knights leading and protecting their people... I bet you see where I am going with this now. :o)

The story that most of us recognise of Arthur, Merlin and his knights is a medieval invention probably taken from much older Celtic stories. Whether or not it was based in any way on a real king or tribal leader I am not going to touch with a barge pole, but I do want to look at the ideal that is Camelot and its King.

Here we have a leader who has all the virtues that we wish our leaders had: nobility of action, brave, honest, just, with a desire to not only lead but serve his people. A leader with a heart who saw his role as one of protector and not dictator. Around him he appointed his knights. Individuals who shared the same vision and strove to embody the same virtues. The table at which they sat has become famous in its own right – The Round Table. In medieval times your seating plan reflected a person's rank and their place in the pecking order, but The Round Table showed that all were equal, all shared the burdens and all would have the same rights and responsibilities. Sorry though, no Merlin, he was a much latter addition – still the TV show is fun.

What we have in this vision of Camelot is a vision of the perfect Kingdom and it should come as no surprise that it is simply a vision of The Kingdom of God. Sadly no human system can come close to matching it. No matter how hard we try, no matter the good intentions of our leaders (I'm being nice here let's give them the benefit of the doubt) something always happens to undermine the ideal, heck even Arthur's court was eventually undermined by jealousy, fear and self-seeking motives. This is not the case with our King. Christ never fails us and he never will.

In Christ we have a King who is truly all powerful. He could demand our service, he could force our homage. We could be the most pitiable of serfs.

Instead our King of Kings demands nothing from us, not even our faith. Everything is our choice; to follow or not, to serve or not, to love or not. We have complete freedom while he, in turn, provides everything. His leadership is one of example and his example is that of sacrificial love. He even rode out and did battle with the worst of dragons, evil and death; the battle cost him his life but he came back victorious! Evil defeated and death, eternal death, is no more. Our King is the greatest of heroes.

Think of the laws of his Kingdom, they are designed to protect and nurture not control; think of what he values, kindness and mercy not gold or silver; think of who he calls into his service, not lackeys and yes men/women but ordinary people who strive to follow his path. Christ doesn't care about your lineage or family tree only about your heart. We, his knights or disciples, belong to the roundest of Round Tables. Our King seeks only the welfare of his people.

So thinking of the attributes of our King, tell me, is he not worthy of our service, our adoration and, yes, our love? I think the answer is an obvious YES! So why can't more people see it? Why aren't there queues of people wanting a Kingdom of God passport?

As with Arthur so it is with Christ; sadly his knights, us, are not up to his standard, at least in this life. We are cowardly lions in comparison (yes I know I am mixing my metaphors but you know what I mean). Instead of seeing the virtues of our King, people can only see the flaws of his knights. We bicker, we support dubious causes, we allow evil to go unchallenged, we sit down when we should stand up, we hide when we should go forth into battle – I'll not go on, I know that you get the picture.

Thankfully our King is also wise enough to recognise and deal with our flaws. **That doesn't mean we should stop trying**, that would be a dreadful betrayal akin to Lancelot and his affair with Guinevere. What it does mean is that, again thankfully, the kingdom's future does not rely on just us – phew!

One of the appealing features of Arthur's story is the idea that he will return. That when Britain is in dire need the noble Arthur will wake from Avalon and take his place once again. Frankly if he hasn't come back during 2020 I'm not sure what he is waiting for! :o)

Christ, however, is the true 'Once and future King'. In the end only he will reign, all humanity will see his virtue and glory, before him every knee will bend and everyone will have to account for their actions (or lack of action) in his Kingdom. The merciful will receive mercy and the cruel will ... well there are consequences; every Kingdom must have justice and our King sees to the heart of every issue.

I love, honour and worship our King. I let him down far too often but I try to be a true knight of his Round Table. What about you? Are you a knight in title only (and aren't there a lot of them around in this day and age) or are you a knight who carries the colours of your King with courage? The colours of our King? The cross of self-sacrifice. His motto? Love one another as I have loved you.