



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

2nd Sunday of Advent-Year A-December 4th 2022

Readings: Isaiah 11: 1-10, Psalm 71, Romans 15: 4-9, Matthew 3: 1-1

‘A shoot shall appear from the stock of Jesse...’

Last week we looked at Advent through the lens of the Patriarch, Noah. This week we turn to the Kings – or rather one king in particular. If you were to take a straw poll of the general churchgoing public and asked them to name Kings of Israel, I would be astonished if most of them got beyond three. Some will know of the first king, Saul, chosen, reading between the lines, for his exceptional height - not a mistake Samuel the prophet makes again. Many will recall Solomon for his early outstanding wisdom, whilst forgetting his ‘loins-led’ descent into the moral dysentery of paganism, or because of his later hijacking by the Masonic movement. A few merry toppers may recall Jeroboam for his irrational association with Champagne but with no idea of his rebel significance in the fatal division of the kingdom. None, I would wager, will recall the cause of that ruinous fracture, Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, ‘the stupidest man in the Bible’ – according to the Bible.

You would, I guess, get a near 100% turnout for DAVID.

David’s star traces the journey of the rest of salvation history and is a touchstone of authenticity for all that will come later. He is, of course, the shoot from the stock of Jesse to which today’s Scripture refers. You

will be familiar with those wonderful pictures of a dormant Jesse with an enormous family tree growing out of his trousers. A genuine cause for 'Ancestry – Envy'. But, truth to tell, Jesse did not appear to rate his youngest son too highly. When Samuel shipped up on a necessarily covert 'King-Shopping' mission, Jesse doesn't even bother to put David on the 'Mr Israel' catwalk.

Before we progress with young David, it is worth saying that Kingship does not have a happy history in Israel. A tiny number of the kings get even a moderate thumbs up from the prophets. Most turn out to be dummies, backsliders and easy meat for paganism, happy to collude with the culture. Its origins are even more unhappy. The people's demand for a KING – 'we want to be like other people...' is seen by Samuel (and incidentally by God) to be a flat rejection of the sovereignty of God. The story of David is epic. It could occupy a year of sermons. Why no-one has made a great movie or musical of it is beyond me. The unconsidered shepherd boy who becomes the paradigm Shepherd King of Israel. The slingshot saviour who destroys the mighty personification of the persecuting Philistine army in the giant Goliath. The courtier whose dangerous popularity Saul resents. The flight from harm, the wilderness years, his chivalric mercy to Saul whose life was in his hands. Then the anointed king, the mighty warrior, the battle blood-stained hero. The poet, the Psalmist, the musician. The faithful worshipper of God. The murderer of his loyal friend to get his wife. The long rumbling rivalry with his arrogant son, Absalom. The Civil War. The ignominious flight. The unexpected victory marred beyond measure by the death of his rebel boy. The deathbed disputes and manipulation over the succession..... But above all, even in the depths of his sinfulness, a penitent heart, a desire for reconciliation and, as the psalms display and help us to eloquently do the same, a passionate love of God and, amidst

the short chaos of our lives, a constant leaning homeward to His love and mercy.

It is to this dynasty, the Davidic line, the shoot of Jesse, that God has promised the eternal sovereignty of the kingdom of His people and to whose authority, eventually, the world will pay court and be obliged to acknowledge.

The Star of David hangs in hope over the whole history of the people of Israel. It is the star that guides us to the stable in Bethlehem to the one authentic remaining claimant to the throne of His Father. It is for this reason that the sermons of the early Church, from the Acts of the Apostles onwards, place heavy emphasis on the Davidic line, the royal dynasty from which Christ, the Son of God, draws His claim and human authority and provenance of His authenticity. In this the Word of God incarnate fulfils the Word of God given to the prophets. Jesus Christ is prophet, priest and King, son of God, son of Man.

In celebrating Jesus Christ, King of the Universe at the climax of our Christian Year, as we so recently did, we are voluntarily and enthusiastically surrendering the sovereignty to God. We are acknowledging that He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords now, always and in all eternity, the once, future and forever Monarch and Messiah, Sovereign and Saviour. It is why we kneel when we enter His Presence and bow before His Name and as we approach His royal and eternal throne.

And cry out, like the blind man on the roadside, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.'