

Christ the King - a Meditation
25th November 2012

Readings: Daniel 7:9-10 and 13-14
John 18:33-37

It was dazzling, just as if I was looking into the sun. And there were thousands and thousands of people, their eyes fixed on the source of the light. I could see what must have been a throne, and someone sitting on it. A man - no, more than a man: a king, THE King, his name so holy I didn't dare even to whisper it.

I was overwhelmed by the sight: all the people, the light, the King, and I dropped my eyes. But then there was a murmuring from the crowd, and I looked up and saw that the King had stood up and was straining to see something way out beyond the entrance. And as if in unison, everyone else turned, and they gasped at what they saw. I stayed watching the King, and I could see utter anguish on his face. His eyes were fixed on a scene far away, and his eyes were tight with pain.. Even the light seemed to flash out less brightly from around Him, and He stood immobile, rigid, tight with pain and grief - and the inability to do anything at all. Nothing was happening here; it was all going on far away.

There was silence from the vast crowd as they watched the scene. No one moved.

And then it was over. At last it was finished it was accomplished. The King looked down and closed his eyes for a moment, and when they opened again there was a new light in them. The grief and the pain began to fall off Him, and He stood tall and straight and proud. He began to look for something or someone, to shift around a little on his feet, to strain to see something. He looked excited, expectant - and proud.

I turned to follow his gaze, and I saw a man approaching, but still very far away. He was hobbling slowly, his feet dragging, as if he was hurt and utterly exhausted, and as he came nearer I saw that he had hardly any clothes on, just a loincloth. He was dirty and bloodied, a wreck of a man. But as he came in through the gates, he lifted up his head, and in his tired eyes I saw . . . triumph! He straightened his back and began to walk faster. The crowd around him began to wave and then to cheer, and a great roar spread through the crowd, a roar of exultation and, yes, of worship!

Then suddenly the King was running, running towards this stumbling, ragged man, his arms outstretched towards him, and over all the hubbub He let out a great yell: "My son!" It was a wild shout of joy and pride and relief. He threw his arms round his filthy son and then led him to a throne next to his own. And as they approached the thrones, the dirt and the pain began to slide from the man, his limp left him, and he stood up, strong and triumphant. And he was given king's robes.

Now they stood there facing us, the Father's arm tight round his son's shoulders, his son with one arm stretched out, the hand still broken and bruised, but clean. I suddenly saw what the son was pointing at: it was a ragtag line of scruffy people following after him, stretching all the way to the horizon, a handful in front, but more and more and more of them as I looked into the distance. They were obviously in a hurry, eager to get here, but they didn't look much, I can tell you. And yet, as they got to the gate and were welcomed in, they also seemed to lose their pain; the scruffiness, the frowns, the limping and the struggle in their faces fell from them.

Each of them was given a clean robe, and they came running in, their eyes fixed on the King and his son, who were standing there waiting to welcome them - to welcome them home.

The crowd was enthralled. They cheered as each new one came through the gate and came running up as close as they could get to the King and his son. There was a grin of sheer delight on the face of both the King and his son as each new arrival came up close to them; they noticed and welcomed by name each one arriving, and all the new arrivals shone with the same light of excitement and joy.

There would be no more tears - there had been enough of those; no more suffering, no more grief - ever. It was party time!

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