

## Expectations of Royalty

I wonder: what is your opinion of Prince Harry and Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex and their decision a couple of years ago to step back from royal life and move to California? Considering that they are part of our royal family and so there were significant expectations on how and where they would live and work, what do you think of the decision that they made?

there is certainly a lot of divided opinion about Harry and Meghan and the decision they made. Some people think it was the worst decision in the world, that an English prince should never step back from royal life and should certainly never leave England to live elsewhere and that they were very unfair to other members of the royal family. While other people think the decision was totally up to them and if they were struggling with life here so much, then why shouldn't they move somewhere else?

In fairness, we will never really know what goes on behind the closed doors of the palace and maybe it's not our business but the newspapers have certainly had an awful lot to say about it because whether it's right or wrong, we in England have very particular expectations for how our royal family should live and work – whether that's the king or a prince. When they choose to defy those expectations, whatever their reasons, it can provoke considerable controversy, challenge and discomfort – at the very least debate.

Now, if you hold in your mind how controversial Harry and Meghan's decision has been, then maybe it might help you to have some idea of why it was so controversial when Jesus the expected and prophesied king, lived his life in a way that was totally different to how people expected the Messiah would live. The Messiah wasn't supposed to be a poor, homeless, wandering religious teacher – he didn't do it right! And the Messiah was most definitely NOT supposed to be captured, tried, beaten and then put to death on a Roman cross, dying the death of a traitor to the empire. That wasn't how things were supposed to go.

But here's the thing: Christians believe that Jesus was and is a king, BUT that his kingdom is not of this world. We believe that Jesus reigns in glory in heaven, that he is over and above all of the powers of this world and that his heavenly kingdom lasts forever. That's why we continue to celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, even by reading the story of his dreadful death here on earth.

This gospel reading is supposed to be unsettling. It's supposed to make us think. It's supposed to encourage us to compare our ideas of kingship to the type of kingship Jesus demonstrated – because he didn't come to lord it over us and behave like an earthly king. Instead, Jesus came to be a servant leader, in other words the way he showed his glory was by getting down in the dust and putting the needs of other people first always. That is the king that we celebrate in the person of Jesus Christ and that is the type of kingship that as Christians, we seek to emulate and model our own lives on – someone who puts others first and serves their needs before our own, no matter the cost.

## Luke 23:33-43

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [[Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.]] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by watching, but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."



Eternal Father, whose Son Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven that he might rule over all things as Lord and King: keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace, and bring the whole created order to worship at his feet; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.