

St Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor
Reverend Rebecca Newland
Christ the King & Ability Sunday
20 November 2011

Ezekiel 34.11-16; Ephesians 1.15-23; Psalm 100; Matthew 25.31-46

Today is many celebrations in one.

It is the last the Sunday of the liturgical church year. The Anglican Church always begins a new year on the first Sunday of Advent, which is next weekend. We enter they season where we await the celebration of the birth Christ our Lord. The gospel set for the coming year is Mark so we will be reading our way through Mark the rest of 2011 and through 2012.

Today is also the Feast of Christ the King. This is a celebration to remind us that even though there are many competing demands on our attention, many philosophies, ideologies and distractions, our one true Lord is Jesus Christ. This Lord and King we follow is no ordinary human King. He is the Word co-existing, co-eternal, one with God and the Spirit. He is also the Word who became one with us, fully human with human gifts, traits, abilities, doubts and fears.

So it seems most appropriate that today is also Ability Sunday. This Sunday is sometimes called Disability Sunday. Here at St Philip's we have called it Ability Sunday because wanted to emphasise what people can do, not what they can't. In the Episcopal Church in America calls it Access Sunday. So often in our culture we are put into a box and limited because of what people think is a disability. What is a disability after all? I would suggest it comes down to perception.

We all have different abilities and disabilities. In fact most of us have some type of 'disability'—eyes that don't work properly, ears that only pick a small part of the sounds in the world, arthritic hands and feet, twisted backs, depression, legs that don't move, arms we cannot lift over our heads. Show me someone with a 'perfect' body and mind and I will show you a mythic being. It is often said that Jesus was without sin. This may be so but I would bet my house on the coast that he was not always fully able and healthy. But here's the thing even if he was he gave it all up for us when he allowed his body to be broken on a cross.

The message of the Gospel is that our salvation, our wholeness, is never about what we can do or not do. It is only ever about what God's grace and love can do in Christ and in us. Whatever our abilities or disabilities our task is to bring the same grace and love into our lives. God can gift the world around with what is any man, woman or child, with whatever they have, with whatever seems to hold them back. The task of the Christian Community, the church, is to be a place of inclusion where each and every one of us can be encouraged and supported to bring out the best in us for the good of all.

My thanks today to Tracey Barralet and Melinda Mitchell for bringing their gifts to us.

[Rebecca then introduced Melinda, who spoke about her work in disability services.]