

## The Kingdom of God

The news this last week has been dominated by events in Zimbabwe and the resignation of Robert Mugabe as President. The 37 year tenure of this 93 year old leader finally came to an end. How the country will now develop and change remains of course to be seen.

Robert Mugabe is by no means the first and will not be last leader of a country forced to relinquish their grip on power. We have seen many examples of that in recent years. In a number of countries years of oppression have been followed by liberation. But sadly in its place there has often been not peace and stability but chaos and conflict. Let us hope that does not happen in Zimbabwe.

Arguably an important measure of a leader or ruler is how they treat the poor. On that count alone the Mugabe regime clearly failed dramatically. Unemployment in the country is a staggering 95 percent. Inflation is at a horrendous level. To buy even the basic necessities is extremely difficult. And that is a country that has rich resources and once had a successful agricultural industry. Indeed it was once called the breadbasket of Africa. In a country where wealth is siphoned off to a select few there is bound to be resentment and a call for change. Now appears to be the moment when that change might become a more tangible reality.

In the Church of England the last four weeks before Advent form a kingdom season, with the feast of Christ the king this coming Sunday. Our focus is on the kingdom of God and on the kingship of his Son Jesus Christ. That kingdom is based on justice and love, on holiness and compassion. It is based on the two great commandments to love God and to love our neighbour. And our neighbours includes the poor as well as our enemies.

This is well expressed in the passage we heard just now from the letter of James (James 2.1-10). This is a message that those in power should hear and take to heart: to care for the poor and not to show partiality, especially to rich and powerful allies. For it was to the poor and the rejected that Jesus himself turned particularly in his earthly ministry.

The contrast between the kingdom of God and earthly kingdoms is all too apparent in our world today, as indeed it always has been. That continues to be a challenge to those of us who seek to follow the way of our Lord Jesus Christ. For it is the task of Christians to make known God's kingdom in our world today. It is our calling to proclaim and uphold those same values of the kingdom, those values of justice and love, holiness and compassion, in a world in which there is so much self-interest and a seeking for power.

Yet we believe that in that task we are not left alone. For we believe that God is always active in his world. We can be assured of his loving presence, even in the darkest places of the world. And for that we give thanks.

24<sup>th</sup> November 2017  
Kingsley Boulton