

# Christ the King – Nov 25 2012

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*Rev 1:4-8; John 18:33-37 – White Ribbon Day*

**Intro:** Today is a special day, one that means a lot to me, and our passages about Jesus' power and how uses it speaks so powerfully into the issues surrounding this White Ribbon Sunday, which is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and launches us into a fortnight of international activities to address this scourge on our world, culminating in International Human Rights Day on 10<sup>th</sup> December. We're going to consider what we have to learn.

**The Passages:** We have some powerful passages before us this morning. Jesus, riding on the clouds – people mourning because they see now who Jesus is – they would not have treated him as they did, if they had known. Here is Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega – awesome – ruler of kings, glory and power to Him, the almighty. Vv.5b-6 has so much packed into it: God's love for us; the freedom that he has won for us because of the slavery that is true for us because of our identity as sinners; the finished work of Jesus in history, at which his blood was shed to accomplish that freedom; the transformation of our identity from sinner to saint – a kingdom (the place where Jesus rules) and priests (the people who may draw near to God and bring the concerns of a needy world before Him, making reconciliation); the purpose of that transformation – so we can serve God, our Father who loves us, so we are back where we began. Service and not the exercise of power is the aim of all of this, and that keeps us in the circle of God's love. Glory and power are His! He rules the kings. The kings are not the ones with power. He is the Almighty – nobody else.

But look at the way Jesus uses this power in His earthly life – he tells Pilate that His kingdom is so different, he is not going to command his men to fight. He is simply here to bear witness to the truth. Those who rejoice in truth will warm to Jesus and those who prefer to resist truth will suffer the consequences of that. We can choose to be friends of truth or not – that choice is open to us – but we cannot choose the consequences.

**Our Situation:** In our world, there are so many people who chase after power, and are quick to fight and control. Sometimes they even try to use Christianity to justify their exercise of power. There are those who are very quick to fight, and to raise their fists, rather than follow the example of King Jesus, who really was powerful, but didn't assert his power in violence or disrespect. There are those who seek to control and manipulate, rather than follow the example of King Jesus, who simply bore witness to the truth and allowed the truth to do its own work, without any manipulation or guile. They are those who will kick you, punch you, spit at you, call you names, put you down, lie to you, rape you, tell you what to wear, wake you repeatedly in the night to deprive you of sleep, smash your things, move your things to make you think you're going mad, push you down the stairs, deny they are abusing you, call you ugly, shout at you, mock you, tell others lies about you, isolate you, steal your money, choke you, burn you with cigarettes, hurt you in front of your children, hurt your children, stalk you, call you a failure, seduce your friends, keep you in fear, recruit your own family to gang up on you, maim you, tell you that you have no way out, hunt you, tell you that it's because they love you, believe that they own you and that is not all. This is what domestic violence can look like, and this is one of the biggest ways we see people failing to follow the model of King Jesus.

- 95% of people who suffer from domestic violence like this are women
- About 15% of men do some of these things to the women and children closest to them.
- 1 in 3 women globally will experience this at some point in their lives, and 1 in 4 in the UK.

- The trend is increasing, with 1 in 3 teenage girls having suffered unwanted sexual acts, and 1 in 4 physical violence.
- In Norfolk, a woman is murdered by a partner every 12 weeks or so.
- More women are killed or maimed through domestic violence than through war, AIDS, cancer and road traffic collisions combined.
- There is an assault on a woman in England and Wales every 6 seconds, all day, every day, 7 days a week.
- Former UN secretary, Kofi Annan said that this is: “The most pervasive human rights violation in the world.”
- Domestic abuse is just as common in church as outside – though people stay longer in abuse and tend to suffer more if they are Christian.

And some people justify this through their Christianity, I kid you not. After all did God not say that “the wife’s desire would be for her husband, and he would rule over her”? Well, yes, God did say that in Genesis 3, as part of the curse, along with pain in childbirth and sweat in work – but that’s no reason not to administer pain relief during childbirth, nor to abandon tractor production! This God, with a heavy heart, foreseeing what would be in a fallen world, not proclaiming what is his perfect will for the natural working of things. But, shouldn’t we expect a wayward wife to have to be brought forcefully into line by the head of the household if she doesn’t do what she’s told and behave how she should? She should submit, that’s what the Bible says. Well, yes, the Bible does say a woman should submit to her husband, right after it says that every Christian should submit to every other Christian, including husbands submitting to wives, and right before telling us that husbands should love their wives as Christ loves the church, self-sacrificially, without demanding, and with respect. And it is not lack of submitting or forgiveness to report him to the police for treating you like he owns you.

**What Can We Do?** There is plenty we can do make a difference with all of this, and we each have a role. We can pray; we can provide a listening ear and a supportive environment for women (or men) experiencing abuse; we can speak up against any teaching in the church that demeans women; we can help to guide and protect our young people as they explore relationships and may easily fall into damaging behaviours; we can give to support local refuges and other services, like Leeways, or Restored; we can educate ourselves by reading up on this, so we are armed in conversation; we can reflect upon and challenge our own attitudes and behaviours; we can adopt the Restored Charter at our PCC and pin it on the notice board; we can “Like” or “Tweet” or “Pin” [www.breaking-the-silence.co.uk](http://www.breaking-the-silence.co.uk)!

But most of all this year, the organisations involved in this are focusing on the need for men to stand in the gap and follow the example of King Jesus – to be the first to stand up among other men you know, to respect women, and to speak to other men about ending violence and negative attitudes towards women. For evil to prosper, it just takes good men to do nothing. King Jesus shows us how to use power responsibly, and it is up to us to close that gap where abusers are able to operate, and to shame the abusers into believing the truth and behaving better. You can make a personal pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women, and if we all did that, the abusers would shrink. Go to the website to find out more about how you can make that pledge.