Let’s pay attention to today’s service, because on this feast of Christus Rex, it seems to me that it so clearly speaks for itself. Today the Liturgy takes us on an amazing journey, unfolding the nature of Christ, who He is and what His Kingdom is. It soars through the themes of the liturgical year like a stunt plane doing loop-the-loops, and bids us notice and join in Let me explain…

Our liturgy began, ‘repent for the Kingdom of heaven is close at hand’. Then a glorious Mozart Gloria (very St Marylebone – a bit of Mozart). Singing with the angels above Bethlehem the choir sings to God on our behalf ‘Glory be to God on high and in earth peace to men of goodwill!’ We sing ‘gloria!’ because we have confidence that the repentance we have just offered is surely met by God’s torrential mercy.

And so, on this feast of Christ the King we have already begun to see something of the nature, of the taste, of the culture and life of His Kingdom: mercy and glory. And these two realities embodied in Advent and Christmas. St John the Baptist’s cry of ‘repent!’ to which we will return in Advent, and the Christmas angels, singing from heaven on that wonderful night to startled peasant shepherds – Glory be to God on high.

This Christ the King, our liturgy has begun to reveal the stuff of God’s Kingdom and point us towards the coming Advent and Christmas. And all that in the first few minutes of our Eucharist. Let’s keep going…
Before Young Church left we prayed the Collect. As I prayed, on behalf of us all, we zoomed from Christmas straight through, past Jerusalem and Good Friday and the empty tomb, to 40 days after Easter (are you dizzy yet? Is theological vertigo a thing? Let’s find out) to Jesus’ Ascension into heaven.

To when He goes home to take up an eternal throne. And by His humanity, now enthroned in heaven, to secure a home for us and all humanity there too, in the Kingdom of Heaven. Now, Heaven isn’t just for angels, a man rules on heaven’s throne – Christ the God-man– and so we can have confidence that our humanity will be at home there too – the way is open.

And not just us…

From His throne – as today’s collect prays – we pray that Jesus our king would bring the ‘whole created order’ to find their home in Him too. All matter, all of time and space, every corner and crust of life, the universe and everything, will find its ultimate belonging in Christ’s kingdom. This is a startling truth of the Gospel.

So having reached Ascension Day and what followed, there He reigns, over a kingdom that is eternal. That is, therefore, already, even though it is yet to come in its fulness.

All that, and we haven’t even reached the first reading yet. St John the Baptist who went before: ‘repent’, turn back to God. Christ’s Kingdom of mercy met with glory. Advent expectation, and the mystery of the Incarnation at Christmas and what has happened as a result of it, and the promise of Christ’s universal rule.
In the first reading we then went even further, to Christ our King’s triumphal return. When, sometime in the future (we know not the day nor the hour) Jesus will come again. Not like Caesar, He will come full of grace and peace and awesome love. ‘Coming with the clouds’, our first reading said, ‘every eye will see him’ and ‘even those who pierced him’ will see He is the ‘Alpha and Omega’, that is to say, the source and destination of all that is and ever will be.

Christ the King will come again. So Marylebone’s own Ralph Vaughn Williams bids that our hearts and every corner of the world with us, would sing ‘my God and King!’ – that when He comes, He would find our hearts lifted, our lips full of song, our lives ready for His Kingdom. Wonderful.

But still, our vision of His kingdom, our words for it, musical depictions of it, our thoughts about it are the scribblings of infants in the face of the truth.

Continuing on our journey, Pilate faces just this in today’s Gospel. ‘Is it x?’ or ‘is it y?’ ‘is Jesus this?’ ‘Or that?’ Scrabbling around to tie down who Jesus is, where and what His kingdom is in terms that make sense to Pilate, to us? And the answer, of course is: ‘no, it is more’.

This King and His Kingdom are greater, more radical, more real, than any of our words and pictures can hold.

I’m reminded of C S Lewis image of heaven in the ‘Great Divorce’ – that the grass is so real it practically cuts the feet of those who walk on it, ‘hard as diamonds’ more real than reality, of substance truer than anything we are or know now. This Kingdom is when the words run out, when language is blunt,
and desperately tries to throw us beyond its own reach. Pilate found just this. So, we have reached the Creed, which does just that: words, on the edge of words. The words we sing speak of truths beyond themselves. And end, after taking us deeply into the mystery of God’s being and purposes, with… a longing for His kingdom. A kingdom for which Obi will pray after the creed: she will lead us in praying for the unity, peace, healing and eternal life that belong to that kingdom to break through now. We pledge ourselves as subjects of that kingdom in the Peace – to ourselves be answers to prayer.

And we taste of that kingdom, and seal its promise in God’s own blood, in the Eucharist.

We speak the language of that kingdom as our mother tongue when we pray the Our Father. Those words, becoming incarnated in our lives.

And then, finally, we are blessed and sent out, to notice and join in. Just as we’ve noticed and joined in the Liturgy today, as it has unfolded (even dizzyingly, sorry about that) the themes and reality of Christ’s Kingdom and the substance of our faith. So life becomes liturgy, and liturgy, life: we have noticed and joined in with the unfolding of God’s kingdom here, so we go out to notice God’s action in the world: His coming and His Kingdom, to notice and join in.