

Christmas

Carols : Duke Wenceslaus

Foundation

Bible passage: Mark 10.42-45

Wenceslaus was born about 907AD in Prague, which was then the capital of Bohemia, and is now the capital and largest city of the Czech Republic. His father was Duke of Bohemia, but died when Wenceslaus was only about 14 years old. Wenceslaus became Duke himself when he was 18 years old and he soon gained a reputation for his energy and the way in which he cared for his people and gave generously to others. However, his brother, Boleslav was jealous of Wenceslaus and arranged for some friends to murder him so that he could become Duke.

After Wenceslaus' death the stories about how much he had cared for his people began to be spread and before long at least four different books about his life had been written. This was at a time when books had to be written and copied by hand. People came to see Wenceslaus as an ideal ruler, someone who people followed not because he was harsh or threatening, but because of his energy and his godliness. They saw him as trying to live like Jesus.

“the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”

At His birth and death Jesus was proclaimed to be King and is now reigning in glory. Yet He said “the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10.45). It is through Jesus' ransom that people can be forgiven by God and set free but in order that we then seek to live like Jesus.

Wenceslaus had loved and cared for his subjects, and such was his popularity and fame that he later became known as King Wenceslaus. Today there is a large statue in Wenceslaus Square in Prague of the Duke riding a horse.



A song written about Wenceslaus, and over 800 years ago is one of the oldest songs in the Czech language, it is still sung today and was sung at the 2011 funeral of a former Czech President.

The English carol, **Good King Wenceslas**, was written 160 years ago by the hymn writer, John Mason Neale. It tells of one incident from the life of Wenceslaus.

On the television, in films and books, we often see people who lead through being strong willed and sometimes unpleasant to others. But Wenceslaus became famous because his energy and godliness inspired people to love him and follow him. Jesus told his disciples not to lord it over one another, but to serve one another (Mark 10.42-45) and Jesus Himself came among us not to be served, but to serve.



Wenceslaus was a Duke, but like his master Jesus wanted not only to rule, but to serve and care for his people.