

Order of Worship Sunday 22nd November

Christ the King

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WELCOME

Welcome to worship on this last Sunday of the church year. Yes, next Sunday is Advent Sunday and we look forward to Christmas. We don't know what sort of Christmas we may have but we do know that what lies at the heart of it will not change; that Jesus came to earth as a humble baby to show God's love for us all and so today we think of that humble baby as our King as we celebrate Christ the King!

CALL TO WORSHIP

Shout praises to the Lord, everyone on this earth.
Be joyful and sing as you come in to worship the Lord!
You know the Lord is God! He created us, and we belong to him; we are his people, the sheep in his pasture. Be thankful and praise the Lord as you enter his temple. The Lord is good! His love and faithfulness will last forever. (Psalm 100)

HYMN O worship the King!

PRAYERS

We come to sing to you, Lord,
to make a joyful noise to you, our rock of salvation.
We come thankfully into your presence,
and our songs of praise will be joyful and noisy.
For you are our God and a great King,
a king above all else we think important.
You hold the deepest caves on the earth in one hand
and the highest mountains at the same time.
You made the sea and it is yours,
and your hands shaped the dry land.

And so we come together to worship you and bow down,
we kneel before you, our maker.
You are our God, and we live on your land,
we are your sheep, made by your mighty hand.
And as we worship you, as we make that joyful noise,

help us, today, to listen to your voice.

Amen

We can be blind to the needs of others. .
Forgive us for ignoring suffering and open our eyes, Lord Jesus.
We can forget to speak out for others.
Open our mouths, Lord Jesus. .
We don't always offer to help others.
Take our hands, Lord Jesus, and show us how to give ourselves in love. .

Amen.

READING Matthew 25: 31-46

REFLECTION

In these strangest of times we have been thinking a lot about leaders and people in positions of power recently. We've heard a lot about the US presidential election, it seems to have dominated the news for a very long time and it appears to have pitted one style of leadership against another, seemingly very different style. We've also heard much about those in our own Prime Minister's team of advisors and their departure.

In today's very well known and often read passage, we read how the Son of Man, when he comes in glory will 'separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left'. One of the fascinating aspects of this reading is that before the people are judged (for their actions), they are initially separated.

We are familiar with the saying 'united we stand, divided we fall' and, in our society, we tend to reject anything that causes separation or creates division. One of the common complaints levelled against 'outgoing' US President, Donald Trump, is his divisiveness. And a key plank of President-elect, Joe Biden's campaign, was a commitment to bring both sides together to create a 'United States' (although time alone will tell whether this will be possible during his tenure). Similarly, the 'departures' in Boris Johnson's inner circle of advisors were an attempt to create unity and improve morale in the Cabinet Office and the Tory Party.

Unlike today's Gospel reading, which clearly delineates between those who did the right thing (the sheep), and those who did not (the goats), we often tend to use arbitrary – and unhelpful – criteria to cause division; such as ethnicity, religion, class, politics etc. Moreover, there is a clear element of scapegoating (no pun intended) linked to our divisions – people and groups

are singled out and blamed for their activities and behaviours. History shows that this reproaching invariably leads to some form of punishment.

The Black Lives Matter campaign, which one would think would unite people around a common wrong has caused possibly even more division, with people missing the point as they claim that All Lives Matter -which of course they do, but that somehow misses the point. This just emphasises the point that when we as humans judge others by our own human standards things go wrong.

Divisions also continue as people express their views on the way governments in the nations of our “United” Kingdom are handling our current position.

We see from today’s reading that Jesus Christ is the great – and only – judge; a king with the integrity and wisdom to know who is truly ‘good’ and who is not. We also know that he is compassionate and has a passion to see real unity between God and all those created in his image.

And so today let us celebrate the Kingship of our Lord as we prepare to enter again that time of waiting, waiting for the ‘helpless babe’ who is the only one who can lead us in the right way. Amen

ANTHEM Rejoice the Lord is King!

PRAYERS

‘Lord, when was it we saw you...?’ How might we answer this question to you, our Lord and Maker? (*silence*) Nearly all of us will have at least one specific time, with one specific person, that we wish we had spoken out, or had been more welcoming, or more supportive, more helpful. Lord of the insignificant, forgive us our inaction. (*silence*)

‘Lord, when was it we saw you hungry or thirsty?’ (*silence*) In all places and all communities soup kitchens and food banks are now the norm. Even so, it is still not difficult to see people begging. Gracious Lord, even your disciples balked at feeding a multitude with five loaves and two fish. Yet you call us to share of what we have; not what we lack. Lord, give us generous hearts. (*silence*)

‘Lord, when was it we saw you a stranger or naked?’ (*silence*) Not since the middle of the last century has the world seen so many refugees and displaced persons. Wars, famine and persecution have caused a seismic shift in our human family. Compassionate Lord, teach us your unflinching

obedience to the law of love and open our hearts to the suffering and loneliness of those around us. (*silence*)

‘Lord, when did we see you ill or in prison?’ (*silence*) In modern Western society we generally institutionalise those who are ill or have been convicted of wrong-doing. The current situation has made us realise how important it is to make an effort to visit those within our institutions and those who are forced to be alone as they shield or self-isolate, otherwise they may go unnoticed. Many may be feeling like that now as visiting is hard. Lord, you have called the ‘least’ of society your brothers and sisters. Impel our hearts to seek those who are behind bars or languishing in nursing homes, that we might offer a kindly human presence to those who feel forgotten and uncared for. (*silence*)

God, our Creator and our Judge, may we never be counted among those who never saw you among the ‘insignificant’ masses. Grant us courage and clear vision to live according to your law of love, seeing all whom we meet as sisters and brothers. We pray together the words he taught us.....

LORD’S PRAYER

OFFERING PRAYER

Generous God we bring our offerings of money and we ask that they may be blessed to your service so that your kingdom may come, now and always. Amen

HYMN The King of Love my Shepherd is

BLESSING

Let us look into our hearts, and know that the Lord is with us.
Let us look out to the world, and serve her needs.
Let us look up to those who are icons of hope.
Let us look down on the ground where we walk, for it is holy.
Let us go in peace and be useful in Jesus’ name. Amen