

Morning Worship for November 22nd; Christ the King

Preparation

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength;
ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name.

The whole earth is full of his glory.

The Lord shall give strength to his people;
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.

Opening Prayer

Holy God,

faithful and unchanging:

**enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,**

that we may truly worship you,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Cast your burden upon the Lord:

And he will sustain you.

Create in us clean hearts O God:

And renew a right spirit within us.

Cast us not away from your presence:

And take not your Holy Spirit from us.

Give us the joy of your saving help:

And sustain us with your life-giving Spirit.

Blessed be the Lord day by day:

The God of our salvation who bears our burdens.

We confess our sins.

God the Father forgives us in Christ

and heals us by the Holy Spirit.

Let us therefore put away all anger and bitterness,

all slander and malice,

and confess our sins to God our redeemer.

(cf Ephesians 4.30,32)

Come, let us return to the Lord and say:

Lord our God,

in our sin we have avoided your call.

Our love for you is like a morning cloud,

like the dew that goes away early.

Have mercy on us;

deliver us from judgement;

bind up our wounds and revive us;

in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May almighty God,

who sent his Son into the world to save sinners,

bring you his pardon and peace,

now and for ever. **Amen.**

Praise

O Lord, open our lips:

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Let us worship the Lord:

All praise to his name.

Gloria in Excelsis

Glory to God in the highest,

and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,

almighty God and Father,

we worship you, we give you thanks,

we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,

Lord God, Lamb of God,

you take away the sin of the world:

have mercy on us;

you are seated at the right hand of the Father:

receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,

you alone are the Lord,

you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,

with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The word of God

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Ephesians.

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

This is the word of the Lord: **Thanks be to God. (Ephesians 1:15–23)**

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew:

Glory to you, O Lord

Jesus said to his disciples: ‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Then he will say to those at his left hand, “You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and

in prison and you did not visit me.” Then they also will answer, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?” Then he will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.” And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’

This is the Gospel of the Lord: **Praise to you, O Christ**

(Matthew 25:31–46)

A reflection by Rev'd Stephen Burge

This Sunday is the Feast of Christ the King. It is also the last Sunday in the Church's year – next Sunday we will be in Advent, the new Church Year will have begun, and before we know it Christmas will be upon us. The Feast of Christ the King is actually a relatively new festival and was only introduced in the Roman Catholic Church by Pope Pius XI in 1925, so it is not even 100 years old yet. But the Church of England, as well as many other Churches, saw the merit in dedicating a day to remember Christ's Kingship and God's sovereignty over our world and our lives.

This morning, I would really like to focus on the Collect – the prayer for the day that is said at the beginning of our communion service and towards the end of our service today. The aim of a collect prayer is to do exactly what it says on the tin. We come to worship in all manner of different ways, some of us may be joyful, others anxious, some of us have doubts, some may be worried about someone or something in their lives – we are a diverse bunch of people; but when we hear the words of the collect, we are *collected* together, and reminded that our worship is not just personal, but is something that we do together, held in community with others. This same prayer will be said in every Anglican church in England; added to that very similar prayers will be said by all the other Anglican churches throughout the world, as well as in many other denominations too. That's quite an amazing thought – despite our differences, whether theological, cultural or emotional, we are all sharing in prayer with many Christians across the globe, thinking about particular ideas and beliefs about Jesus.

So what does the collect for Christ the King say? The words of the prayer are:

Eternal Father, whose Son Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven that he might rule over all things as Lord and King: keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace, and bring the whole created order to worship at his feet; who is alive and

reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

These words give us much food for thought about what Jesus' Kingdom means.

The first important idea is that as Christians we believe that Jesus ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. The Ascension is a joyous event, but, if we remember what Jesus had to do to get there, it is also one that is tinged with sadness. The joy of the Ascension and Christ taking his role as King is marred by the pain and suffering of the cross, pain and suffering that we ourselves have caused. Christ's Kingship is rooted in Christ's humility – he is not a King that lords it over the world, but he is a King that became a servant, that reached out to the outcasts of society and challenged abuses of power. In Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats that we heard in our Gospel reading today, we are reminded of the importance of service and of servanthood. Jesus does not reward those who seek to help only those whom they think are worthy of receiving their help, instead Jesus rewards those who helped the poor, the hungry and those in prison. Christ's Kingdom is not about power, but love. In our reading from the *Letter to the Ephesians*, Paul says, that Jesus is "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come." This power and dominion which Christ holds is gained through his sacrifice, through his becoming a servant, not through force.

The second important idea that comes through the Collect is the idea of the Church being united with the Spirit through Christ's Kingship. The Church is here to try to establish God's kingdom on earth, but to do that it needs to listen to God through the Holy Spirit. Above all the Church needs to embody Christ's model of kingship. All too often, the Church has sought to exert power like the kings of the secular world, seeking dominion over lands as well as over people's souls. All too often, the Church has exercised its unique position within society for its own corrupt ends. All too often, the Church has failed to speak out against abuse and corruption, not just in the world around it, but within it too. The Church must always be a *servant* Church, serving its communities, emulating the way in which Jesus engaged with those who were ignored and abused in his own lifetime: the tax collectors, the prostitutes, the lepers; and it can only do this if it listens to Spirit and embodies the servant kingship of Jesus. The power and sovereignty of Christ the King is about growth through *service* and that is what the Church is called to be too and what we are called to be too.

The third important idea is that Christ's Kingship is about peace. The Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, says something rather deep and meaningful about what peace is and means. The word *shalom* is related to the idea of *wholeness*: when have a sense of wholeness, we are at peace. In our broken world there are far too many people whose lives have no sense of wholeness because of poverty or abuse, because of war or exclusion, or because of a loss of hope or faith. As individuals we need to remember that cannot make people 'whole' and we cannot bring people 'peace' all on our own, but we can help people on that journey. For me that is what today's Gospel is all about – visiting those in prison, or feeding the poor, or giving hospitality may not heal people or instantly make them 'whole', but that act of love shows those on the margins of our society and those who are not at peace, that they are loved, by us and by God – this is the first, but most important, step in gaining allowing people to gain a sense of wholeness and peace.

So when we come to worship at the feet of our Saviour, Christ the King, we are worshipping the one who is sovereign over the world and our lives. Earthly rulers will come and go, but our King is sovereign forever. More importantly, our sovereign Christ the King is a *servant* King, who calls us to live lives of service too: it is in serving others that we grow and really come to know what it means to worship God. True Kingship has its foundations in love, so when we worship Christ the King, we do so in awe of his majesty and power, ever thankful for his sacrifice for us and the grace that he bestows upon us, but, above all, we worship him contemplating his message of love and service to others, and how we can show that in our own lives. Amen.

Our faith

Let us declare our faith in God Father, Son and Holy Spirit

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,**

**and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession led by Chris Banks

Lord we know that you hear us when we pray in faith, when we place our trust in you. Hear us now as we pray together today for Joy, for Stephen, for Gordon and for the whole family of St Mary's who find themselves unable to meet together in your church to worship, that we might soon be reunited in faith.

Lord, in your mercy; **hear our prayer**

Strengthen your church in the service of Christ, praying this morning for our Bishops, Alan, Richard, and Michael and for our spiritual leaders as they guide us through these dark moments when hope for a return to normality is often lost, that our church at all levels might be inspired to drive your church and its people forward in following your path.

Lord, we pray too today for all those living in Edlesborough; in Pebblemoor, Kings Mead and the Pastures that we might each be mindful of, and care for, our neighbours in so far as we are able or permitted.

Lord, in your mercy; **hear our prayer**

Lord, we give grateful thanks for the dedication of our health professionals and for the skill of scientists endeavouring to perfect a drug which will protect against the Coronavirus. We think too of all who expose themselves to risk in caring for others in hospitals, in care homes and in everyday life.

Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit – thinking especially of all those affected in any way by Coronavirus – whether infected themselves, concerned about exposing themselves to risk as they try to live as normal a life as possible, or worried about loved ones whom they cannot care for or even offer physical comfort to. We pray too for those on our prayer list or for whom we have individual concerns or worries.

Lord God, whose son, Jesus Christ, understood people's fear and pain before they spoke of them, we pray for those in hospital; surround the

frightened with your tenderness; give strength to those in pain; hold the weak in your arms of love, and give hope and patience to those who are recovering.

Lord, in your mercy **hear our prayer**

At a time when the world seems to be in turmoil and the news that we read or hear is often dark, Lord we ask that by your hand a spirit of reconciliation might prevail, that nations might be united and peoples once again co-exist in a state of peace and friendship.

Lord, hear us too as we think of those who have recently died in the faith of Christ and families who cannot properly mark the loss of their loved ones as well as remembering those whose years mind falls at this time.

Lord, bring your comfort and peace to all who mourn.

Lord, we pray for all who are lonely:

children who are being bullied and dare not tell anyone;

shy people who find it hard to make friends;

those who feel rejected and isolated;

those whose partner has died or left them;

and above all, elderly people who miss their families and old friends.

Lord, be with them all, in your infinite love.

Lord, in your mercy **hear our prayer**

Lord, perfect in us all that is lacking in your gifts:

of faith, to increase it,

of hope, to strengthen it,

of love, to rekindle it,

and make us fear one thing only,

that we should honour anything more than you,

our Father, and Saviour, and our Lord.

Merciful father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

A prayer for the coronavirus pandemic

Keep us, good Lord,

under the shadow of your mercy

in this time of uncertainty and distress.

Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,

and lift up all who are brought low;

that we may rejoice in your comfort

knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

*We join together with Christians throughout the world in the prayer that
Jesus taught us.*

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.**

**Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

Give us this day our daily bread.

**And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Conclusion

The Collect for the day

Eternal Father, whose Son Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven
that he might rule over all things as Lord and King: keep the Church in the
unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace, and bring the whole created
order to worship at his feet; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of
the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power.

For you have created all things,
and by your will they have their being.

You are worthy, O Lamb, for you were slain,
and by your blood you ransomed us for God.

From every tribe and language and nation,
**you have made us to be a kingdom and priests
serving our God.**

To the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
**be blessing and honour and glory and might
for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 4.11;5.9b,10,11)**

*We end with the words of the Grace, an ancient Christian prayer of
fellowship, remembering that although we are not together in person,
nothing can separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus our
Lord.*

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the
fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.**

*Please let us know if you want us to pray for you either individually or if you
would like to be included on the Prayer Chain.*

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Reverend Joy Cousans; Reverend Stephen Burge

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