



**22<sup>nd</sup> NOVEMBER 2020**

We're again in lock down; churches have been told to close until 2 December and we don't know what will happen then. So you'll need your worship space again. Find your candle, your Bible and cross and use this service to focus your hearts and minds on God.



## INTRODUCTION

Christ the King Sunday marks the end of the little season of remembering in November. We remember who we serve and what kind of king he is. We often think of God as king and Lord and sometimes all that imagery feels a bit triumphalist and bombastic. In our democratic age the idea of an almighty ruler strikes the wrong note.

But when we think of Christ as king we are in very different territory. We think of him, as he told us, as the king who serves.

As I sit at my desk, I can see the Grub Tub and the boxes for collecting **Shloer**. (If you're not aware St Max has contracted to provide 50 bottles for Urban Outreach to include in the Christmas hampers they send out – 'Christmas dinner on Jesus'. They can be left at the Vicarage carport by the Grub Tub.

For us this is a way of serving. Giving to those in need through Urban Outreach or any other organisation dedicated to the service of those in need is perhaps the best we can manage these days. All those of you who volunteer are having your work put on hold for the time being. But when we find ourselves released back into life with other people we may find the need has spiralled. How will we service others then?

**PCC** met on Tuesday and we spent some time thinking about how we will celebrate Christmas. In the current circumstances. We'll be publicising that in a couple of weeks.

Meanwhile Advent is upon us. We'll not be in church for Advent Sunday on 29<sup>th</sup> November so the start of this lovely season will happen in our homes. Across the Team, we're suggesting you make your own **Advent wreath**. Our Advent devotions will give you a reflection, reading and prayer to say each Sunday as you light your candles. Look out for the details and start creating!

Revd Jan

He is the King of glory who overcomes the sting of death and opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers.



## **PRAYER OF PREPARATION**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen

## **CONFESSION**

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'  
So let us turn away from sin and turn to Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and  
faith.

O King enthroned on high, filling the earth with your  
glory:  
holy is your name, Lord God almighty.  
In our sinfulness we cry to you to take our guilt away,  
and to cleanse our lips to speak your word,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



## **ABSOLUTION**

May almighty God who sent his son into the world to save sinners,  
bring us his pardon and peace, now and forever. Amen

## **GLORIA**

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 sins of the world: have mercy upon 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 COLLECT**

God the Father, help us to hear the call of Christ the King  
and to follow in his service, whose kingdom has no end;  
for he reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, one glory. Amen.

## OLD TESTAMENT READING

Ezekiel 34.11-16, 20-24

For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out.

As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek

out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.

I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.

The word of the Lord: Thanks be to God

## NEW TESTAMENT READING Ephesians 1.15-23

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**

**GOSPEL** Matthew 25, 31-46

Alleluia, alleluia. Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven. Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of Christ according to Matthew **Glory to you O Lord**

Jesus said to his disciples

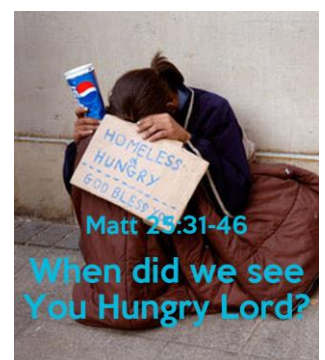
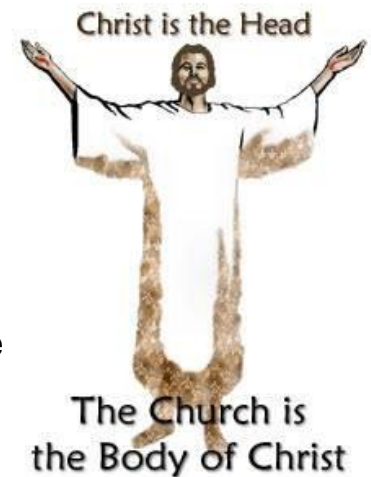
‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory.

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**

## REFLECTION

Some years ago, a book came out called *Models of God: Theology for an ecological, nuclear age*. The author, Sally McFague argued that the images of God used in the Old and New Testaments emerged out of societies very different to our own. In particular, she saw the use of images as King and Lord of the universe as drawing on a monarchical structure, where the King was in charge and everyone else just did as they were told.

Almighty, omnipotent, all seeing, all-powerful: a whole set of ways of thinking about God that underpins much of our theology. Sally McFague says in her book that it is entirely the wrong set of ideas for today’s world, not only for the way it views us as people of God but also for what it implies about the relationship between God and the created world.

If we see God as an autocrat then he can do what he likes with his creation and people.

It’s a good job we do have the life of Christ to balance this picture out.

For Christ the King is usually represented on the cross. Not on a throne or mighty stallion but on a cross. His words and actions show us a very different take on kingship.

He is the king who shares his table with those the society of the day rejected. He is the king who laid hands on the diseased and infected. He is the king who sits astride a donkey to travel into his city. He is the king who washes the feet of his court, his followers. He is the king who allows himself to be bound and tortured. He is the king who is executed on a wooden cross.



It is on the cross that his kingship is shown most clearly, taking the sorrows of the world upon himself and bearing it all. But he is the king who is vindicated, who cannot be kept down by death. His death opens for the world a new way to God, a new way to the kingdom he inherits.

So we dedicate ourselves to his service following the path he laid down for us, a path that includes suffering and pain but also witnessing through service and compassion.

We use the language of kingship but subverting it as he lived it. So we judge all those in authority as well as ourselves by his standards. How far we all fall short.

Our prayer is for ourselves that we may truly follow him whose service is perfect freedom. Amen

Revd Jan

## **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist? I believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again? I believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world? I believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

This is my faith. I believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

During the intercessions, we pray for the church, our country, our government, people in difficulty and those who have died. You can use your own prayers or if you *prefer here are some on today's theme.*



Let us with confidence present our prayers and supplications to the throne of grace. We pray for all those in positions of power, that they may govern with wisdom and integrity, serving the needs of their people.

We continue to pray for leaders across the world struggling to govern amid the ravages of the pandemic; may all learn from those who have been most successful at controlling and limiting the infection and deaths; prepare them all for ensuring that a successful vaccine is available to all who need it.

May your reign come; **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the Church, the sign of your reign, that it may extend your welcome to people of every race and background.

We pray always for the leaders of the church; for Stephen our Archbishop; for David and Mark our bishops; may they be strengthened to encourage and support congregations while they cannot worship together; inspire all clergy and people to find new ways of being the Body of Christ in times of isolation; pray for the person who will be the next Team Vicar for us.

May your kingdom come; **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for Christians of every denomination, that together we may come to understand the royal priesthood you bestowed on us in baptism.

We pray for our fellow Christians in Bolton; for Urban Outreach doing your work among the poor and homeless in our town; for all who give to the suffering with no thought of themselves; for ourselves that we may never pass by on the other side.

May your dominion come; **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who are ill, including with Covid19, that they may be comforted in their distress and have the courage to endure.

Pray for all who work at Royal Bolton Hospital and in the emergency services; for all those who are alone in their homes and in fear and unhappiness; for those who have lost their jobs and have no income; for children and young people struggling to cope with education under lockdown, that they may all retain hope and trust in a better future.

May your rule come; **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for this community of faith, that attentive to your word we may always worship in spirit and in truth.

Pray for St Maxentius and all the churches of the Team, that we too may be confident in the promises of God, that he will take care of us as a shepherd cares for his flock.

May your reign come; **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Loving God, you have taught us that the power of the heart is greater than the power of wealth and might. Hear us as we pray for the fulfilment of your reign. We ask this through Jesus Christ our King; to him be glory and power forever. **Amen.**



### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come, your will be done  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever, Amen.**

### **THE BLESSING**

Christ our King make us faithful and strong to do his will, that we may reign with him in glory;

and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us now and always. Amen

# **JESUS CHRIST, OUR KING**

