

SERVICE AT HOME: 21st November 2021
Christ the King Sunday

Preparation

Spend a few moments in silence. Clear your mind of clutter and distraction. Ask God's Holy Spirit to wash over you.

Call to Worship - Psalm 93:1-2 (NRSV TRANSLATION)

The Lord is king, he is robed in majesty;
the Lord is robed, he is girded with strength.
He has established the world; it shall never be moved;
your throne is established from of old;
you are from everlasting.

Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along

Come on and Celebrate (StF 44)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ekZlByjMVI>

Come on and celebrate
his gift of love, we will celebrate
the Son of God who loved us
and gave us life.
We'll shout your praise, O King,
you give us joy nothing else can bring,
we'll give to you our offering
in celebration praise.

*Come on and celebrate,
celebrate,
celebrate and sing,
celebrate and sing to the King.
Come on and celebrate,
celebrate,
celebrate and sing,
celebrate and sing to the King.*

Patricia Morgan and Dave Bankhead

Words and Music: ©1984, Thankyou Music.

Administered by Kingswaysongs, a division of David C Cook.

Prayers of Approach and Confession

Christ the King, we humbly bow before your throne of grace.

Christ the King, we bring you our praise and worship.

Christ the King, we sing songs of thanksgiving in our hearts.

(In a moment of silence, remember those things for which you are thankful)

Merciful Father, we recognise that sometimes the temptation to sin is powerful, the desire to gratify our instincts is alluring and the habit of turning our eyes from Christ the King is prevalent.

Forgive us, Father, when we fail to hear your truth. Forgive us, Father, when we ignore the opportunities to extend compassion and empathy to others. Forgive us, Father, when we choose to become Kings and Queens of our own lives.

(In a moment of silence, reflect and ask for God's forgiveness, according to your own situation.)

God's kingdom is eternal.
God's grace is unbreakable.
God's forgiveness is universal.

We are forgiven by the atoning sacrifice of our King. He gave his life that we might live.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

Prayer for Illumination

Father,
what we know not, please teach us,
what we have not, please give us,
what we are not, please make us
for your Son's sake.
Amen.

Traditional Anglican Prayer

Bible Reading - John 18:33-38 (NIV TRANSLATION)

³³ Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

³⁴ "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

³⁵ "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

³⁶ Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my

arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

³⁷ “You are a king, then!” said Pilate.

Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

³⁸ “What is truth?” retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.”

Reflection

Her Majesty the Queen will reach an important milestone in 2022 – her Platinum Jubilee. Throughout the year, there will be a number of special events held across the nation as we celebrate and give thanks for her historic 70-year reign. At her Coronation Service in 1953, the then 26-year-old monarch was presented with a bible by the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, James Pitt-Watson, who said:

“Our gracious Queen: to keep your Majesty ever mindful of the law and the Gospel of God as the Rule for the whole life and government of Christian Princes, we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is Wisdom; This is the royal Law; These are the lively Oracles of God.”

From the very beginning, God’s Word has been important to our Queen and she has never sought to keep her faith a secret. Indeed, it has informed and shaped her years of service. To celebrate her 90th birthday, a book was published. The title gives a strong indication of how she views herself in relation to God – *“The Servant Queen and The King She Serves.”*

On Christ the King Sunday, we reach the end of the church calendar in a climactic celebration of the glorious Kingship of Jesus, a king unlike any other. Advent begins next week and we’ll be preparing ourselves for the arrival of him – the one who was born in a lowly stable, who rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, who wore a crown of thorns and who died on a cross between two criminals. This sequence of events hardly seems regal and yet, it was this same king who rose from the grave and defeated death, a feat that no earthly monarch could ever achieve.

Our bible reading takes place in a palace which was originally constructed by another king; Herod the Great. The palace was known as Antonia Fortress and was located just outside the north west corner of the temple. It was here that the ruling Roman prefect, Pontius Pilate, stayed whilst in Jerusalem.



A model of Antonia Fortress circa 32AD. Credit: The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

Pilate knew full well that the Jewish leaders hated Jesus. He also knew that they didn’t have the authority to put him to death, only he could give permission for this. Pilate wasn’t exactly popular among the Jewish population and tensions were running high. Don’t forget that it was Passover and the population of Jerusalem had swelled to some two million for this important event. Political rebellion and the threat of ensuing conflict was a very real possibility. The Romans had to tread very carefully to avoid this.

But Pilate wasn’t prepared to sentence a man to death without sufficient evidence. To be honest, he wanted nothing to do with it but was pressured to act. In our scripture, we’re told that he questioned Jesus. The first thing he wants to determine is whether or not Jesus poses a political threat. Was he leading a rebellion to overthrow the Roman occupation?

The Jews were using the word ‘king’ to mean their religious ruler, the promised Messiah. They didn’t accept that Jesus was this person and viewed his actions and words as blasphemous. Pilate however, couldn’t care less about their beliefs and was more concerned with things that might pose a threat to his control of the region.

He questions Jesus directly; *“Are you the king of the Jews?”* There’s no small talk here, he gets straight to the heart of the matter. Jesus is equally direct with him and poses a question of his own; *“Is that your own idea, or did others talk to you about me?”*

Jesus is inviting Pilate to think for himself and draw his own conclusions about who Jesus is. One of the hardest things to accept when sharing our faith with others is that they may reject Jesus. Despite our best efforts to describe who Jesus is and why he’s so important, it’s not always going to lead to that person accepting Jesus into their lives. This is not a failure on our part.

It’s also important to note that some may hear about Jesus and believe that he is indeed who he says he is, but be unwilling to make any significant changes in their lives. Following Jesus is not without sacrifice and suffering. Yes, we are given eternal life by God’s grace, but Jesus tells us that we are to serve and not be served. We are to become like children and that the first among us shall be last. This is radical teaching and difficult for some to embrace. Even some believers among us can find it hard. Do you sometimes feel this way?

I think Pilate was a man who, deep down, believed what Jesus was saying. I think he recognised the truth he was hearing and therefore found Jesus to be innocent. But don’t forget about the angry crowd outside. No matter what he thought, I’m sure he realised that he would need to appease those who were calling for crucifixion, even though he could plainly see that Jesus wasn’t a threat.

Jesus proclaimed that his kingdom was not of this world. If it were, he would have an army of supporters willing to bear arms against the Roman occupation.

“...In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth.”

Did you notice that Jesus isn’t simply repeating himself here? He’s saying something profound. Firstly, he acknowledges his humanity (he was born) and then his divinity (he came into the

world). Only faith recognises the Son of God in the humble person of Jesus Christ. Pilate thought that truth was relative, but here he stood facing absolute truth incarnate. Pilate has the opportunity to put his faith in Jesus, to accept the truth he has heard and to act on it. But ultimately, he chooses to reject it.

I’m not sure what’s more tragic, someone who fails to recognise the truth or someone who recognises the truth but fails to heed it. The fact that Pilate later washed his hands of the whole sorry affair gives us an indication that the latter is most likely in his case. We don’t know what became of Pilate later in his life, although there are many theories. One tradition states that he *“became his own murderer.”* In other words, he took his own life, undoubtedly feeling shame and guilt. If that’s the case, then what a wasted opportunity he had.

In our modern world, we are constantly exposed to the notion that the truth can be whatever you *feel* is right. Let us not forget that Jesus wants us to *think* about what is right, using his standard of absolute truth. *“Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”*

Kings and kingdoms will come and go. Empires will rise and fall. God’s kingdom is eternal. Christ is the King!

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Loving Lord, we bring before you our concerns for others and the world in which you have placed us. We call upon the power of Christ to manifest itself in our lives so that we may be a part of your solution to the troubles and concerns which we leave at your feet.

We pray for the Church throughout the world, that she may be a voice for those who lack even the basic necessities of life, tirelessly serving them and calling for change.

We pray for the world’s leaders, that they may not hide behind their power or abuse it, but work for the good of all humanity, particularly the poor throughout the world.

We pray for our local community, that we may show our love through our respect for each other and for our environment, gladly sharing what we have with those in need. We pray for our friends, our families and others that are known to us. We pray for those suffering with ill health, bereavement, loneliness, hopelessness and abandonment.

In an act of will, O God, we place ourselves in your presence.

In an act of faith, O God, we open ourselves to your light.

In an act of silence, O God, we rest in your glory.

In an act of love, O God, we put ourselves in your hands.

To the glory of our living Lord, we pray.

Amen.

Written by Linda Jones/CAFOD.

The Lord's Prayer

You are invited to say the prayer that Jesus taught us, in whichever language or tradition you prefer.

Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along

Christ Triumphant, Ever Reigning (StF 319)
TUNE: Guiting Power | METER: 8.5.8.5 with refrain

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPXSILECWm0>

Christ triumphant, ever reigning,
Saviour, Master, King!
Lord of heaven, our lives sustaining,
hear us as we sing:

*Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name!*

Word incarnate, truth revealing,
Son of Man on earth!
Power and majesty concealing
by your humble birth:

Suffering servant, scorned, ill-treated,
victim crucified!

Death is through the cross defeated,
sinners justified:

Priestly king, enthroned for ever
high in heaven above!
Sin and death and hell shall never
stifle hymns of love:

So, our hearts and voices raising
through the ages long,
ceaselessly upon you gazing,
this shall be our song:

Michael Saward

Words: © Michael Saward / Jubilate Hymns.

Administered by The Jubilate Group, 4 Thorne Park Rd, Torquay, TQ2 6RX.

Dismissal and Blessing

God is not confined to the words on this page.
God doesn't disappear when things become
difficult.

God goes with you and empowers you by his Holy
Spirit.

So go into the world, safe in the knowledge that
you do so by royal decree. The King of the
universe has sent you to share the Good News to
all.

Go in peace to serve your King.

Amen.