

Christ Church, Ipswich

Sunday 21st November 2021

Christ the King Sunday Worship

Hello, I hope you are well.

Christmas Donations – As you will have seen in November’s Comment, we are once again supporting three charities over the Christmas season with financial gifts, Home Start Suffolk, Christian Aid and Suffolk Refugee Support. We need to send our financial support to Home Start at the beginning of December to give them sufficient time to purchase gift vouchers and distribute them to families in need. So please could you send any Christmas donations to the Church’s bank account (with ‘Christmas’ as the reference) or post/pass a cheque to John Durnford, during this coming week and by 1st December at the latest. Please see this month’s Comment for full details of how to give this Christmas. Thank you.

Christmas Fayre – The BB Old Boys Association have decided that it is not practical to hold the Fayre this year. However, there will be a virtual sale of produce in support of Christ Church funds. A list of items is available from Ron Baker or Sheila Storey.

Next Sunday 28th November - On Advent Sunday, the children will be making Christingles at Junior Church.

Christ the King Sunday this year brings before us readings from Daniel 7, Revelation 1 and John 18:33-37.

Call to worship

We come today to acknowledge Christ as King.
His throne is a cross, and he reigns from high heaven.
Beauty and holiness are the marks of his kingdom.
He is the face of God revealed in human form.
Let us keep our eyes fixed on him:
King Jesus – the Way, the Truth and the Life.

A gathering prayer

God of gods and King of kings,
be with us as we seek to know more of your truth.
Speak to us by your Word and your Spirit.
Help us to see Jesus, and to hear his voice –
not just for today, but for all days,
and for the glory of your kingdom.
In Jesus’ name we pray. **Amen.**

A prayer of approach

King of kings and Lord of lords, you are our God.
Before time began you were.
Your voice, Lord God, is louder than the roars of the oceans.
You are more powerful than the crashing waves of the sea.
You are forever and forever and forever.
You were. You are. You will be. **Amen.**

R&S 269 Jesus shall reign where'er the sun

1 Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
does his successive journeys run;
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more.

2 For him shall endless prayer be made,
and praises throng to crown his head;
his name like sweet perfume shall rise
with every morning sacrifice.

3 People and realms of every tongue
dwell on his love with sweetest song,
and infant voices shall proclaim
their early blessings on his name.

4 Blessings abound where'er he reigns;
the prisoners leaps to lose their chains;
the weary find eternal rest,
and all who suffer want are blessed.

5 Let every creature rise and bring
peculiar honours to our King;
angels descend with songs again,
and earth repeat the loud Amen.

Psalm 72:12-19
Isaac Watts (1674-1748) altd.

A prayer with our children before they go to Junior Church.**A prayer of adoration**

God of mystery and magnificence, we see you as our king.
We read of visions of your throne, flaming and ethereal.
You are beyond our imagining,
beyond our dreams and visions and wildest hopes.
You are in us and with us and among us.
You are all we could imagine and wish for and more.
You are our God, our king of all creation. **Amen.**

A prayer of confession

O Lord our mighty God,
we have heard but not always listened to you:
with sorrow and sadness, we confess our sin.
We have seen need and closed our eyes to it:
with sorrow and sadness, we confess our sin.
We have closed our ears to cries for help:
with sorrow and sadness, we confess our sin.
We have known your truth and yet followed lies and falsehoods:
with sorrow and sadness, we confess our sin. **Amen.**

Assurance of forgiveness

The Lord God says:
be assured your sins are forgiven,
your slate is wiped clean.
Listen to the word of God and know its truth. **Amen.**

A prayer of thanksgiving

For the vastness of your being, our God and king:

we give you thanks and praise.

For your promise to be with us always, our God and king:

we give you thanks and praise.

For the giving of your truth, our God and king:

we give you thanks and praise.

For your voice that calls us, our God and king:

we give you thanks and praise.

For the life of Jesus, our God and king:

we give you thanks and praise.

For the indwelling of your Holy Spirit, our God and king:

we give you thanks and praise.

For the promise of your kingdom, our God and king:

we give you thanks and praise.

For the promise of your eternal welcome, our God and king:

we give you thanks and praise. Amen.

R&S 657 Rejoice, the Lord is King

1 Rejoice, the Lord is King;
your Lord and King adore;
mortals, give thanks, and sing,
and triumph ever more:

*Lift up your heart, lift up your voice:
rejoice, again I say: rejoice!*

2 Jesus the Saviour reigns,
the God of truth and love;
when he had purged our stains,
he took his seat above:

3 His kingdom cannot fail,
he rules o'er earth and heaven;
the keys of death and hell
are to our Jesus given:

4 He sits at God's right hand
till all his foes submit,
and bow to his command,
and fall beneath his feet:

5 Rejoice in glorious hope;
Jesus the judge shall come,
and take his servants up
to their eternal home:
*We soon shall hear the archangel's voice;
the trump of God shall sound: rejoice!*

Charles Wesley (1707-88)

OT Reading: Daniel 7:9-10 13-14

Judgement before the Ancient One

9 As I watched,
thrones were set in place,
and an Ancient One took his throne;
his clothing was white as snow,
and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames,
and its wheels were burning fire.
10 A stream of fire issued
and flowed out from his presence.
A thousand thousand served him,
and ten thousand times ten thousand stood
attending him.
The court sat in judgement,
and the books were opened.

13 As I watched in the night visions,
I saw one like a human being
coming with the clouds of heaven.
And he came to the Ancient One
and was presented before him.
14 To him was given dominion
and glory and kingship,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not pass away,
and his kingship is one
that shall never be destroyed.

NT Reading Revelation 1:4-8

⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

⁷ Look! He is coming with the clouds;

every eye will see him,

even those who pierced him;

and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.

So it is to be. Amen.

⁸ 'I am the Alpha and the Omega', says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Gospel Reading John 18:33-37

³³ Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' ³⁴ Jesus answered, 'Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?' ³⁵ Pilate replied, 'I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?' ³⁶ Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.' ³⁷ Pilate asked him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.'

Reflection

In our reading from John's Gospel this morning, we hear about events that take place on the morning after Jesus was arrested. He has been put on trial by the religious leaders and now he is brought before the Roman procurator, Pilate. As we listen to the story and hear Jesus and Pilate's conversation, we notice a stark contrast between Pilate's understanding of kingship and authority and Jesus'. For Pilate, this is about rules and power; for Jesus it is about truth and community. We find Jesus making it clear why he is here. He has come to make the truth known.

I'm sure we all enjoy reading the fourth Gospel. For good reason, it may well be a favourite for some of us. For many years, it was the Gospel I would most often read. This Gospel, written 20-30 years after Mark, in the late first-century reads like a play, with characters entering scenes, signs being performed, and dialogue or dramatic speeches engaged in, before the writer moves the action on to the next scene. In the middle of this drama, the truth that Jesus embodies emerges. This context and content relates directly to today's reading and in the tense dialogue of this week's passage, the particular truth that emerges is about the identity of Jesus, his kingdom and the nature of truth itself.

In John 18:37, we find an intriguing reflection on the birth of Jesus: ³⁷ *Pilate asked him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth'.* In keeping with the prologue to John's Gospel (*'In the beginning was the word...'*), Jesus' origins are presented by this Gospel writer as being beyond this world. *'I came into the world'* speaks of heavenly origins rather than the natural processes of childbirth. The message here is that the truth Jesus embodies is the truth of the eternal kingdom of God, which, while experienced in the world, does not originate in it and is not bound by it either. The truth that Jesus testifies to transcends the confines of time and culture. And the gospel's first readers would no doubt have noticed how this is in clear contrast to the cultural and political truth of the Roman Empire, which is represented in this scene by Pilate.

The passage ends with Jesus saying that *'everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.'* What does this remind us of? Well, we hear in these words clear echoes of at least two of the great 'I am' sayings of Jesus in John's Gospel: *'I am the way and the truth and the life'* (John 14:6); and *'I am the good shepherd'* (John 10:11) whose sheep *'listen to [his] voice'* (10:16). To belong to Jesus is to listen to him, to follow his direction, to follow in his way and to discover and to live by the kingdom truth he embodies.

All this talk of truth, does, of course, leave us asking, as Pilate did, what is truth? And I'm sorry but I'm not sure I would be able to offer a simple and succinct solution to this important and enduring question! As we know, it is now as it has ever been! It means different things to different people: thinking of recent events, we could mention the Brexit bus, or the US elections in 2020 as two clear examples that show this is so. Others may quickly come to mind for you. We also read in this Gospel that Jesus is '*the way, the truth and the life*' and as those who are amazed by the particular way that Jesus reveals God to us, we will remain deeply committed to learning to listen to his voice in all that we think, say and do. For sure, there are other ways of knowing God, of encountering God, but for us as Christians there is something particularly special, distinctive and unique in the way that we know God through Jesus. We see best what God is like through him and we seek to faithfully follow Jesus, '*the way*'. Jesus is '*the way*' that we gladly choose to journey, in order to know God, to serve God, to love God and make his love known.

We may wish to consider how might we discover truth? How do we listen to the voice of Jesus? Sometimes, though this is certainly not for everyone, truth can come in the form of a dramatic revelation, perhaps through a dream as happened to Daniel, or a moment of vision like that of John in Revelation. It is probably more common for us to hear the Lord speaking to us through our reading and reflecting on the Scriptures. In John's Gospel, Jesus is presented as embodying the truth. In the synoptic Gospels, truth is discovered in community: Jesus facilitates conversations out of which truth emerges. As Christ's body on earth today, we the Church are called to embody and make known the truth of Jesus, who reveals the God who is love and who beckons us follow along in his way. Often, we discover Christ's truth and discern Christ's voice through what seem, or start out as, just our ordinary conversations. At all times and in all places, we remain open to learning about God, ourselves and our divine calling to share the truth of God's love with all of creation. May we know the truth of who we are and to whom we belong through Jesus and may we find this truth enormously empowering. Today, as we celebrate this truth on the festival of Christ the King, may this knowledge strengthen us whatever challenges we are facing. Amen.

A moment for reflection as we listen to some music

R&S 571 Christ is the King! O friends rejoice

1 Christ is the King! O friends rejoice;
brothers and sisters, with one voice
tell all the earth he is your choice:

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

2 O magnify the Lord, and raise
anthems of joy and holy praise
for Christ's brave saints of ancient days:

3 Christ through all ages is the same:
place the same hope in his great name,
with the same faith his word proclaim:

4 Let Love's unconquerable might
your scattered companies unite
in service to the Lord of light:

5 So shall God's will on earth be done,
new lamps be lit, new tasks begun,
and the whole Church at last be one:

G. K. A. Bell (1883-1958)

Our prayers of intercession

King of love,
you came among us not as a mighty ruler but as a child.
We pray for the children in our midst
that we would cherish them, listen to them and protect them,
and that we would bring their concerns to the heart of our worship.
We remember all who lead ministry among children and young people,
and ask for courage, kindness and wisdom
as they help children and young people to flourish in faith.

We give thanks for all who work in safeguarding,
and ask that we would all be more aware of the signs of abuse,
and work to make our church communities
places of safety and sanctuary.

We long for your kingdom where the weak are defended.

You call us to follow you.

Help us to hear your voice.

King of love,
as Azeem Rafiq's testimony shines a light on institutional racism in Cricket
and on the damage caused by bullying, abuse and unjust systems;
we pray for fresh courage for all who work tirelessly for racial justice,
and for all who challenge the status quo to urge change.

May we never be bystanders to distress
but ready to speak for the voiceless;
more urgent in our cry for equal treatment of all
and more insistent that our churches reflect genuine diversity.

We long for your kingdom of justice and freedom.

You call us to follow you.

Help us to hear your voice.

King of love,
we pray for the homeless and for the displaced peoples of the world;
for people who sleep on the street in the cold of the night;
for migrants who have become pawns in a proxy war on the border of Belarus;
and for all children who are victims of adult wars
that they would find shelter and comfort.

You made your home with us;
may we open our hearts to others.

We long for your kingdom of generous self-giving.

You call us to follow you.

Help us to hear your voice.

King of love,
we pray for standards in public life,
and ask that decisions would be taken that reshape parliament and defend democracy.

We pray that MPs would serve the needs of their constituents.
When political leaders fail us because of self-serving desire for status or power
and they do not show commitment to change,
may we be faithful in prayer for them and all leaders.

May we live as you taught us
placing the needs of others above our own;
and work for a world where status is unimportant and the least and last are first.

We long for the values of your upside-down kingdom!

You call us to follow you.

Help us to hear your voice.

King of love,
we pray for the people of Ukraine as Russian troops gather on the border
and for people endangered because of floods and landslides in Western Canada.
We pray for all who have been caught up in the terror attack in Liverpool:
for bystanders and for the driver of the taxi
whose quick thinking prevented a worse tragedy.

We ask that the motivations for this attack would be discovered
and that this incident would not give energy to those who wish to spread hatred.

We long for your kingdom of peace.

You call us to follow you.

Help us to hear your voice.

King of love,

we pray for all who feel alone or in despair
that you would be present in their suffering.

We pray today for all who work in mental health
asking for skill and tenderness as they seek to restore well-being.

We pray for all we know who are sick and ask for your healing.

In the quiet, we name people who need your peace and healing touch today:

We pray for Stephen Hogger, Ellen Naunton, Margaret Widdowson.

We pray for all church friends who are in residential care
and all who are unable to be with us at the moment.

Surround them with your care and compassion.

We long for your kingdom of wholeness and rest.

You call us to follow you.

Help us to hear your voice.

King of love,

through the challenges all around us,
keep our eyes fixed on you.

We pray for our friends and our families
in all their needs and their joys;
and we pray for our church communities
that we would be known by our love
and welcome all in need
just as you have welcomed us.

We long for your kingdom where we will all be at home.

You call us to follow you.

Help us to hear your voice. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

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.

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.**

Hymn Hail Redeemer, King divine!

1 Hail Redeemer, King divine!
 Priest and Lamb, the throne is thine;
 King, whose reign shall never cease,
 Prince of everlasting peace.

*Angels, saints and nations sing:
 "Praised be Jesus Christ, our King;
 Lord of life, earth, sky and sea,
 King of love on Calvary!"*

2 King, whose name creation thrills,
 rule our minds, our hearts, our wills,
 till in peace, each nation rings
 with thy praises, King of kings.

3 King most holy, King of truth,
 guard the lowly, guide the youth;
 Christ the King of glory bright,
 be to us eternal light.

4 Shepherd-king, o'er mountains steep,
 homeward bring the wandering sheep;
 shelter in one royal fold
 states and kingdom, new and old.

5 Sing with joy in ev'ry home:
 "Christ our King, thy kingdom come!
 To the King of ages, then,
 honour, glory, love: Amen!"

Patrick Brennan (1877-1952)

A sending out prayer

Christ our King,
 as we go from this place,
 assure us of your presence with us –
 for we belong to you.
 Help us to look for truth in all places,
 to seek and listen to your voice,
 and to use your power to serve.
 Bring heaven to earth and reign in our lives.
 We pray in your name, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

The Blessing

And may the blessing of God Almighty,
 Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
 be with you now and remain with you always. **Amen.**

The Grace

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