



Theme: Christ the King

Call to Worship: The light shines in the darkness; and the darkness has never put it out.

Prayers of Adoration and Praise:

Blessed are you, Lord our God
Your word brought light and life from chaos
Your light still shines in the darkness of an evil world,
And has never been extinguished.

Praise be to you, Lord God.

Blessed are you, mighty, creator God.
We glimpse some of your creative energy
In the magnificence and wonder, the colour and beauty,
Of the created universe,
Or in the minute detail of the living cell or a new born child.

Praise be to you, Creator God.

Blessed are you, Lord Jesus Christ.
You who welcomed the little child,
Shared the pain of the suffering and marginalised,
Who touched the leper and healed the blind.

Praise be to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed are you, Lord Jesus Christ.
Who's hands stretched out in love on a cross.
Our lives are bound up for eternity
In your resurrection life.

Praise be to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed are you, Spirit of the living God.
You inflame the hearts of those who love you.
You inspire our worship
And guide us in the path that leads to life.

Praise be to you Spirit of the Living God. AMEN

Hymn: For the beauty of the earth

For the beauty of the earth, for the beauty of the skies,
For the love which from our birth, over and around us lies:
Father, unto thee we raise this our sacrifice of praise.

For the beauty of each hour of the day and of the night,
Hill and vale, tree and flower, sun and moon, and stars of light:
Father unto thee we raise this our sacrifice of praise.

For the joy of human love, brother, sister, parent, child,
Friends on earth, and friends above; for all gentle thoughts and mild:
Father unto thee we raise this our sacrifice of praise.

For each perfect gift of thine to our race so freely given,
Graces, human and divine, flowers of earth and buds of heaven:
Father unto thee we raise this our sacrifice of praise.

Reading: Jeremiah 23:1-6

How terrible will be the LORD'S judgement on those rulers who destroy and scatter His people! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says about the rulers who were supposed to take care of His people: "You have not taken care of my people; you have scattered them and driven them away. Now I am going to punish you for the evil you have done. I will gather the rest of my people from the countries where I have scattered them, and I will bring them back to their homeland. They will have many children and increase in number. I will appoint rulers to take care of them. My people will no longer be afraid or terrified, and I will not punish them again. I the LORD have spoken.

The LORD says, "The time is coming when I will choose as king, a righteous descendant of David. That King will rule wisely and do what is right and just throughout the land. When He is king, the people of Judah will be safe and the people of Israel will live in peace. He will be called the "LORD Our Salvation."

Reading: Luke 23:33-43

When they came to a place called 'The Scull', they crucified Jesus and two criminals with Him one on His right and the other on His left. Jesus said "Father, forgive them! They don't know what they are doing."

They divided His clothes among them by throwing dice. The people stood there watching whilst the Jewish leaders jeered at Him: "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Messiah whom God has chosen!"

The soldiers also mocked him: they came up to Him and offered Him cheap wine and said "Save yourself if you are king of the Jews!"

Above Him were written these words: "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals hanging there hurled insults at Him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us." The other one rebuked him saying "Don't you fear God? You received the same sentence that He did. Ours however was right because we are getting what we deserve for what we did; but He has done no wrong." And he said to Jesus, "Remember me when you come as King."

Jesus said to him "I promise you that today you will be with me in Paradise."

Sermon part one:

1. We can't miss the fact that Christmas is on the way! I went away on holiday some while ago in October - you would not believe that in the tourist shops they already had Christmas trees up, winking lights, surrounded by presents and models of snow men and Santa dressed in his winter gear - even though the temperatures were over 30 degrees! When I came home again I noticed that the Christmas adverts have hit our television screens.
2. Very few of the pictures we see will have anything to do with the birth of Jesus the Messiah but when there is any reference to the coming of the Christ child we are fed with a very sentimental picture of Jesus. The stable is very clean and tidy and Mary and Joseph are well scrubbed - even the animals look cute, clean and well behaved.
3. As we head towards Advent and Christmas we might get a surfeit of the sentimental so within the Church calendar, on this Sunday before Advent we asked to look at the subject of 'Christ the King' which is the other side of the person of Jesus, the Christ. It is not just the coming of a vulnerable Christ child, but the breaking into history of Christ the King.

In the beginning of John's Gospel we read these words "In the beginning, the Word (Jesus) already existed; the Word was with God and the Word was God. From the very beginning the Word was with God. Through Him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without Him. The

Word was the source of life, and this life brought light to humanity. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out" This is not cosy and this is not sentimental.

The truth of the Christmas story is that this Great, Eternal, Creator God - King of Kings and Lord of Lords is what our Jesus was before He came into our world as Messiah - He laid aside this glory to become a man. He wasn't glorified after His resurrection and ascension - He returned to His place in glory. This is where He came from.

And we should never forget this aspect of the nature of Jesus.

Illustration: From the Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe: It is an Allegory - Aslan the lion, is a picture of Jesus - the White Witch is Satan. Before they meet Aslan Edmund asks if Aslan is a tame Lion - Mrs Beaver replies 'Bless you, no. Aslan is a wild lion - but he is good'.

Jesus is not cosy and He is not tame! even though at times we try to make Him so.

There are times in our lives when we need the comforting picture of The Good Shepherd, Saviour or friend - when we need to turn to Him for forgiveness, peace and rest but we must keep in mind that He is also King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Christ the King - and He is not someone to be messed with!

4. But what do we mean when we talk of Jesus as King? Our picture of kingship is very different today from the picture which Jews of the first Century had. Today we think of a king as a figurehead, a ceremonial figure. But in the first century a king was someone who controlled everything, who was ruler by right and by might. The king dispensed justice and his word was law. Nowadays, that sort of power is invested in presidents, or dictators or prime ministers. But somehow, Jesus the president or Jesus the dictator doesn't have the same ring about it!
5. To call Jesus the king has the idea of someone who is in total control by right and who is just and dispenses justice to all people and who commands our absolute obedience.

6. Why did the leading Jewish establishment fail to recognise Jesus as King? Remember how they complained when Pilate put the notice 'Jesus King of the Jews' on His cross.

a. Perhaps it was because He just didn't fit the picture they had of the Messiah and they couldn't adjust their thinking to take into account this very different figure.

b. Perhaps it was because Jesus threatened the power which they had. Although the Jewish leaders resented the Romans, they didn't want to upset the status quo because the Romans guaranteed their power and authority. They realised that Jesus was a person who preached against the way of life they enjoyed. They were afraid of rebellion which would bring the wrath of Rome down on them. They were afraid of the consequences. And they were right to be cautious - for this is what happened just 30 years later when the Jewish rebellion broke out and Jerusalem was raised to the ground with escaping Jews being spread around the Empire.

They were blinded by fear - so they didn't listen to what Jesus actually taught - they didn't hear His message of peace and love so they were blind to the reality of the kingship of Jesus - they ignored to demonstrations of His power, stilling the storm and healing the sick.

But there was another reason. Jesus threatened their ancient traditions. Notice that they wouldn't come into the palace of Pilate as they would be contaminated and wouldn't then be able to go into the Temple to celebrate Passover. Nothing was as important as holding on to ancient tradition - it held them together as a people - even if it went against the wishes of God. They could not believe that God was sending His Messiah to lead them in new paths. They believed they knew what was right and they were not going to recognise a new way, spoken by a handyman from Galilee! So they failed to recognise Him and sent Him to His death - they could never have imagined what the consequences of that action would be! So in a few years Israel was destroyed but the followers of Jesus had spread throughout the world and the kingship of Christ was recognised beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire.

But of course - we are not like that are we? Are we? We will come back to that.

Hymn: Jesus is Lord

Jesus is Lord! Creations voice proclaims it,
For by His power each tree and flower was planned and made.
Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it, sun moon and stars in heaven
Cry, "Jesus is Lord!"

Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!

Praise Him with Hallelujahs for Jesus is Lord

Jesus is Lord! Yet from His throne eternal
In flesh He came to die in pain on Calvary's tree.
Jesus is Lord! From all life proceeding, yet gave His life a ransom
Thus setting us free.

Chorus

Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror,
From death He rose, and all His foes shall own His name.
Jesus is Lord! God sent His Holy Spirit to show by works of power
That Jesus is Lord.

Chorus

Sermon Part Two:

Why then do people today fail to recognise the supremacy of Jesus Christ?

- c. Perhaps people just don't recognise His power, authority and strength. I wonder if this is our fault. Perhaps the picture we display of Christ is one of weakness - yes, Jesus is friend, saviour, lover - but He is still not someone to be messed with. To ignore Christ the King has consequences. Perhaps the picture we give is incomplete.
- d. Another possibility is that people have perceived a separation of science and religious belief, forgetting that for centuries it was Christians who were the scientists - who believed that in enquiring into the scientific

world they were revealing the power and majesty of the creator God. The clash between science and the church began in the 17th century and has widened since then - even though some of the best scientific thinkers of today are also Christians.

Unfortunately, there are some scientists who are so puffed up with their own importance that those like Richard Dawkins..... speak in such dismissive terms and are dead set on destroying the faith of those they speak of as 'primitive' that the effect is to make people question what they have believed about Jesus.

I saw a the video we saw some time ago, where Christian scientists spoke about their faith - some people were surprised that there are scientists who see their discoveries as revealing more about the power and majesty of God, rather than destroying faith.

Unfortunately the derogatory way that some scientists speak about people of faith has caused many to fail to recognise the power and majesty of the creator God.

- e. And finally - perhaps people fail to recognise Christ the King because it might mean changing their lifestyle? You don't need me to tell you that we live in a consumerist society. As we come into the Christmas shopping season, when spending reaches fever pitch, how many adverts are based on false premises - that there are things which we deserve; things that are 'must haves'; if we want it is our right to have it; and somehow a for a proper family Christmas there are things we could not do without - and we would not be good parents, grandparents or children if we did not provide them. This is even more true during these times of the cost of living crisis when people who really cannot afford to have the traditional Christmas a liable to get themselves into debt to provide this for their family.

Following Christ the King might mean living by a set of different values - and people moan about the price of Christmas or bringing up children but they are not prepared to opt out.

Sadly we as followers of Christ can be sucked in to these ways of thinking - so that we don't show an alternative way - a way that in itself can lead to peace and contentment and that we don't need 'things' to make us happy.

So, where does this leave us? Do we allow Christ the King first place in our lives - because this is what He asks of us - or do other things get in the way - love of our traditions, false pictures we have of Jesus, owning 'things' or worry about changing the way we live. As we enter Advent again this year - is there something we can do as individuals or as a church to make things different this year so that people can see that we are followers of 'Christ the King'.

Prayers of Confession and Intercession

Jesus, the Christ is glorified as the Son of God, Alpha and Omega,
He is King of Kings: **And Lord of Lords!**

Jesus is seen in earthly form no more.
He is King of Kings: **And Lord of Lords!**

The risen Christ has ascended into heaven.
He is King of Kings: **And Lord of Lords!**

He sits at the right hand of the Father.
He is King of Kings: **And Lord of Lords!**

He has sent us His Spirit for comfort and guidance.
He is King of Kings: **And Lord of Lords!**

Let us praise and adore Him, for
He is King of Kings: **And Lord of Lords!**

Now and for eternity:
He is King of Kings: **And Lord of Lords! Amen**

We admit Lord that there have been times when we have let you down.
We have ignored the needs of the poor and the marginalised, throughout the world,
We have turned our backs on those we don't approve of,
We have judged others and ignored our own shortcomings,
We have not put Jesus first in our lives even though we acknowledge Him to be Lord and King.
Lord, forgive us we pray and help us to be better followers of Jesus Christ.
We thank you Lord that, if we confess our sin you are always ready to forgive us and help us to be true followers of You. **Amen**

Prayers of Intercession:

During this time, think of the world and how people are suffering; bring them to God and pray for them.

Pray for those who suffer because of Global warming and pray for the delegates who have met at COP27 and the decisions they have made.

Pray for those in areas of conflict: Ukraine, the Russian people, Yemen, Syria, The Holy Land, Iran and all refugees living in camps.

Pray for your church and its preachers and those who have responsibilities. Pray for Christians throughout the world, especially those who face persecution.

Pray for the people you know who are suffering.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer Amen**

Hymn: Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence (this is a very old hymn from the 4th century which shows us quite what it meant for Jesus Christ to come into this world)

Let all mortal flesh keep silence and with fear and trembling stand;
Ponder nothing earthly minded, for with blessings in His hand
Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand.

King of Kings, yet born of Mary, as of old on earth He stood,
Lord of Lords in human vesture, in the body and the blood:
He will give to all the faithful His own self for heavenly food.

Rank on rank the host of heaven spreads its vanguard on the way,
As the light of light descendeth from the realms of endless day,
That the powers of hell may vanish as the darkness clears away.

At His feet the six-winged seraph; cherubim with sleepless eye,
Veil their faces to the Presence as with ceaseless voice they cry,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, Lord most high!

Final Prayer:

Jesus Christ, Lamb of God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords,
We thank you for that vision of your eternal Kingdom,
Where all people will live in Justice and peace,
Where pain, grief and death will be swallowed up in victory:

Enable us to live as Kingdom people.

We live in your Kingdom now,

And we look forward to the time when your Kingdom will come,

In all its fullness. Amen