

Dorset South & West Circuit. Written Service. November 23rd 2025
Sunday before Advent. Christ the king.
Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.



Call to Worship. 'Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them. Luke 1:68

STF 56

King of Glory, King of Peace,
I will love thee;
and that love may never cease
I will move thee.
Thou hast granted my request,
thou hast heard me;
thou didst note my working breast,
thou hast spared me.

Wherefore with my utmost art
I will sing thee,
and the cream of all my heart
I will bring thee.

Though my sins against me cried,
thou didst clear me;
and alone, when they replied,
thou didst hear me.

Seven whole days, not one in seven,
I will praise thee;
in my heart, though not in heaven,
I can raise thee.
Small it is, in this poor sort
to enrol thee:
e'en eternity's too short
to extol thee.

Prayers of adoration and confession . Based on Psalm 46

The lord is our refuge and strength, we bring to you our praise and thanksgiving that whatever situations we have been experiencing or are still facing you are the one who never fails us. No matter how life changes and challenges us, you are always constant and unchanging in your love and care for us. Nations might be in uproar and the ground beneath our feet might feel insecure. However you are constantly caring for us and with us. If only we would be still and meditate on your goodness we would see you in the splendour around us. We would see that you are a mighty and awesome. The God who cares for us infinitely and so to you Lord we bring our prayers of gratitude and adoration.

Lord in the stillness of your presence we see that we have often chosen the way of the world rather than the way of Christ. We have compromised when we should have stood firm. We have judged others by standards that we would not judge ourselves by. We have been quick to be critical and angry. Very slow to be charitable and show your love. We have not lived as those who know that the kingdom of God is among them. Forgive our failings and renew us by your grace. **Amen**

Bible reading. Colossians 1:9-14

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Reflection

Today is known as Christ the king Sunday and it marks the end of the liturgical year, before we move into Advent and Christmas. Our bible passage could be seen as a wonderful gift. At this season as we move into present wrapping and giving or preparing Christmas cards and letters, what a wonderful set of words to give to someone. May God fill you... It's often asked as we approach and retell the nativity story, "what gifts would you bring to the Christ child"? As we prepare to move into these pivotal moments of our faith, the words of Paul to the church at Colossae are so fitting for the child born to be king. A kingship that would be one that sacrifices everything for our salvation. Do we stop in our prayers to offer God in Jesus our thanksgiving for his sacrifice for us? Too often we can rush into our prayers with a kind of Santa Claus want list. On this Christ the king Sunday it's good to stop and ponder on who Christ and what is our relationship with him is?

Origins of Christ the king Sunday:

Christ the king Sunday is a fairly recent addition to the church's calendar. It was in 1925, just a hundred years ago, that Pope Pius XI introduced it to the church to combat the rise in nationalism and secularism after World War I. The Pope believed that only when people returned to their faith would true peace prevail. The

festival was originally celebrated on the day before All Saints' Day. The last day of October and it was only in 1969 that the day was moved to its present place.

One wonders what was happening in 1925 and who was Pope Pius XI? He was named, Achille Ratti, born in 1857 near Milan and was ordained a priest at just 22 years of age. He went on to become the director of the Vatican Library for 30 years and became very knowledgeable about the various world leaders and their political beliefs. In 1922 he became Pope and took the name Pope Pius XI. His papal theme was, "the peace of Christ in the reign of Christ". Three major events were to shape his desire to make Christ the king more central to the faith. Firstly at the end of October 1922 Fascist demonstrators and paramilitary blackshirts marched on Rome. The king feared bloodshed and persuaded the prime minister to resign and handed political power to the fascists by appointing Mussolini as prime minister.

Secondly after the signing of the armistice and the treaty of Versailles in 1918, many Germans were disillusioned, believing that they had been wrongly led. The Nazi party in 1921 was established in response with Adolf Hitler as the leader. However the early beliefs and structures of the party were nationalist, racist and fascist. The third concern was focused on the reign of Stalin and the events that were happening in Soviet Russia. The politically astute Pope recognised the danger that these three leaders would bring on world peace. He called them, 'those petty kings'. He condemned their ruthlessness and preached against them and their actions. He proclaimed that there is only one king of the world, Jesus Christ.

I make no apologies for the history lesson and perhaps it provokes us to be more mindful of those who would make themselves 'kings', in our world and to examine their actions. Are they the ways of peace for all people and the ways of the one true king of the world, Jesus Christ? Would we be able to write the words of our bible passage to them? 'For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you'. Words of affirmation of their ways, or words that condemn their actions and pray for their forgiveness?

Lastly a question about the inauguration of the day. Did it stem the tide in people becoming less interested in religion and more nationalist in a destructive manner? It's hard to imagine that it did. However with that background and the events around our world today the festival is more important today than ever. We need to remember that Christ is our king and his ways are not the ways that the world might promote.

Colossians and the one true king:

Our bible passage comes at the beginning of the letter to the church at Colossae. It's written by Paul and Timothy. It's believed that Paul was in prison in Ephesus about a 120 miles from Colossae. Both cities were in what we know as modern day Turkey, or Asia Minor. Paul was not writing to a church that he had established but to a church that he knew about and wanted to encourage. He also wanted to challenge some false beliefs. The church was very newly formed and it's origins are accredited to a man named Epaphras. A local man who had heard Paul speak and had shared the gospel with his local friends. The church was composed of a diverse group of people from Jewish and pagan backgrounds. The church faced pressure from these mixed beliefs that suggested salvation came through special knowledge following rules and mystical practices. Paul wrote to dispel these false beliefs and to make known that Christ is the only answer. His supreme sacrifice on the cross is sufficient and provides freedom from the legalistic practices and empty philosophies of the world.

The ancient city was built on a major trade route. The Colossians produced a beautiful dark red wool cloth. However their business centre diminished with the establishment of the neighbouring town of Laodicea, an aggressive competitor. Both towns suffered from frequent earthquakes Paul wrote to the church in around AD 62 and by AD 400 Colossae was no more. So we see that this early Christian community had more than its fair share of problems. Struggling for survival from natural and sociological disasters. Everything around them must have been uncertain in ways that are hard for us to comprehend.

When we look back at disasters that have occurred and even to the present terrible events that still occur. It's heart warming to see the leaders of those nations visiting the distressed and bringing words of comfort and hope. I came across two interesting and contrasting stories about kings visiting disaster areas. One was about our own king Charles III visiting Southport after a knife attack that claimed the lives of three young girls and the subsequent national unrest in August 2024. His visit was warmly welcomed by the crowds that greeted him. It was heartwarming to read that he held private meetings with the victims of the attacks and would later meet privately with the bereaved families. He also took time to thank the emergency services and all those who responded to the attack. The King called for unity after the unrest and violence that erupted in the days following the far right attack. The other story from the same year is quite different about the reaction of the crowd to the king of Spain's visit to a flood hit Valencia. King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia were pelted with mud and other objects. The crowd was extremely angry and shouted insults. The communities were angry at the slow response and lack of warning about the floods that devastated the region and caused hundreds of deaths. The King despite the attacks attempted to comfort the grieving and to talk and listen, showing compassion to the afflicted.

On this Christ the King Sunday it's easy to see how the King of kings. Christ our King is there with the disaster's and civil uprisings in Colossae, Southport, Valencia. The recent tragic train stabbings in Huntingdon and those recovering from the devastation of hurricane Melissa in Jamaica and the Caribbean. Indeed anywhere and everywhere where people are in need. He comforts the needy and takes the mud, the violence

and all that is thrown at him in anger. His love and compassion is so great that even on the cross he stretched out his arms for our salvation and said "Father forgive them".

Christ the king and our Inheritance.

We constantly live with the question about the continuance of our Monarchy. Polls say that more than half the population would replace the monarchy with an elected head of state. With the recent events concerning the royal family and especially Andrew, our faith in the monarchy is obviously in question. However there is strong support for William to be the next king. Question's are always fired at the monarchy. So in the light of our somewhat unease about an earthly monarchy and our reflection on how Christ the king Sunday was inaugurated amidst growing world unrest and unimaginable chaos. And the chaos continues. So what has Christ the king got to say to enlighten our faith? I am moved by Paul's statement that we are 'qualified,... to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.' When we talk about Royalty or the people who we put on pedestals and revere for what they have done or what they represent. There's always that sparkle as people share their encounter's. Just being in the presence of assumed greatness can reduce the most confident person into a nervous wreck. "He, (or she) spoke to me, I couldn't find words to respond I was so awestruck!" "He shook my hand. I'm never gonna wash that hand again!" In the face of true greatness we feel privileged but unworthy. What if the king of kings were to not only invite you into his kingdom, but invite you to share in his inheritance? I have been privileged to visit Buckingham Palace. The servant's quarters. If you look up over the royal balcony there are some tiny slit like windows and it was in one of those rooms that I and my friends were invited to meet a fellow friend and footman to the royal household. We got to see his state livery, that he would wear when on the royal carriages. He also with great pleasure showed us the gift of a China teacup and saucer that he received as a Christmas gift from the royal family. A truly treasured gift. We didn't get any souvenir's other than being allowed to take a picture from our friends window of the view of the Mall. No photos allowed inside. When the king of kings invites us into to his kingdom, we won't be in the servants quarters. We won't need any souvenirs or have restricted views of his kingdom. He will invite us to share his inheritance each and every moment of every day. St Paul tells us, 'We have been rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into his light'. So in a very true sense we are living in his kingdom now. However the kind of Kingdom that Jesus preaches about looks nothing like the kingdoms of this world. It doesn't involve a jewel-incrusted crown or a throne made of gold. In the same way, God's Kingdom isn't founded on violence, wealth, or military power. It's founded on the sacrificial love that Jesus ultimately embodies to us on the cross. The only crown that Jesus wore in his lifetime was a crown of thorns. Instead of a throne, he was given a tomb.

Nowhere does Jesus advocate for the kind of power and authoritarianism that monarchs often exemplify, and instead of describing himself as a king, he calls himself a servant (Matt. 20:28). The image of Christ the King at its best, hopefully, reminds us of who our true Ruler is and it puts all other worldly powers in submission to him. Christ the King Sunday is a chance to remind ourselves about what God's Kingdom is.

As we follow his kingdom ways, will he give us a free passage from suffering and chaos? No! However Paul says he will give us endurance, patience and strength. We will also be able to give joyful gratitude to God. Let's not forget Paul is writing from prison, no doubt for proclaiming the gospel. He is writing a letter of encouragement to people facing all kinds of challenges. Christ the king will not hesitate to kneel down beside us and raise us up to endure. I was greatly moved when researching for this service to see the picture of the king of Spain with mud on his face and clothes, reaching out beyond his bodyguards, to embrace a person in great distress. How much more will the king of kings reach out to us in our needs. The inheritance that he shares from his kingdom are robes of righteousness, that have been muddied by our own transgressions, but made clean and acceptable by his acts of mercy. His inheritance that he offers to us, is riches beyond our imagination that are there and accessible each and every day. The glories of creation, the joy of acceptance, the knowledge that he loves us and knows our every need. He is the king of kings and all praise be to his name.

STF 185

Sing we the King who is coming to reign;
glory to Jesus, the Lamb that was slain!
Life and salvation his empire shall bring,
joy to the nations when Jesus is King:

Come let us sing: praise to our King,
Jesus our King, Jesus our King:
this is our song, who to Jesus belong:
glory to Jesus, to Jesus our King.

All shall be well in his kingdom of peace;
freedom shall flourish and wisdom increase;

justice and truth from his sceptre shall spring;
wrong shall be ended when Jesus is King:

Souls shall be saved from the burden of sin;
doubt shall not darken his witness within;
hell has no terrors, and death has no sting;
love is victorious when Jesus is King:

Kingdom of Christ, for your coming we pray;
hasten, O Father, the dawn of the day
when this new song your creation shall sing;
Satan is vanquished and Jesus is King:

Prayers of Intercession (from the Church of Scotland faith and action program)

On this Christ the King Sunday We remember that Christ's kingship does not shy away from the agony of the cross, the vulnerability of the incarnation, the risk and betrayal of human relationships in times of danger and threat.

In our prayers for others,
we commit those we pray for into the hands of One who knows the frailties and troubles of human life. And so we pray with compassion for those who hurt and fear and cry today because they have been let down by systems or circumstances or the ones they love.

We remember those whose lives are most affected by climate change, who face hunger, thirst, fire or flood in the heart of their homes. Grant wisdom and conviction to those who hold the power to make a difference, on global, national and individual levels.

We pray with love for those who are lonely or in pain, and for those who care for family and friends in times of need. We acknowledge the stress of being a carer and the sometimes-conflicting feelings of those who are cared for. Bring comfort and encouragement, dear Lord, to situations of conflict, and rest for those who bear the heaviest burdens.

We pray with faith for those we love the most, and for those who have no-one to name them before You. May Your presence surround and bless them today and always. May they know they are loved and known and seen by You. For those who grieve the loss of one they loved, we pray especially that You will encourage them with strong memories and a confidence in Your loving purpose, which holds all souls in life. May we all take comfort from Your words, "Today you will be with me in Paradise."

We give You thanks for the witness of those who knew and followed You as their Lord and King, and showed us what it meant to be a Christian. May they know of our grateful love for them, now and always.

The Lord's Prayer.

STF 347

Crown him with many crowns,
the Lamb upon his throne.
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns
all music but its own.

Awake, my soul, and sing
of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless King
through all eternity.

Crown him the Son of God,
before the worlds began;
and ye who tread where he has trod,
crown him the Son of Man,
who every grief has known
that wrings the human breast,
and takes and bears them for his own,
that all in him may rest.

Crown him the Lord of life,
who triumphed o'er the grave,
and rose victorious in the strife
for those he came to save.
His glories now we sing,

The Blessing

Creator God, Christ the King, Living Spirit,
go before us to give light to those who sit in darkness
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.
And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
surround us and keep us, now and ever more. **Amen.**

who died, and rose on high;
who died, eternal life to bring,
and lives, that death may die.

Crown him the Lord of peace,
whose power a sceptre sways
from pole to pole, that wars may cease,
absorbed in prayer and praise.
His reign shall know no end,
and round his pierced feet
fair flowers of paradise extend
their fragrance ever sweet.

Crown him the Lord of love;
behold his hands and side -
rich wounds, yet visible above,
in beauty glorified.
All hail, Redeemer, hail!
for thou hast died for me;
thy praise and glory shall not fail
throughout eternity.

