

## Service of Morning Worship –Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2020

### Christ the King.

#### Introduction

Grace and peace to us from God.  
May he fill us with truth and joy.

We pray together:

Loving Lord,  
fill us with your life-giving, joy-giving, peace-giving presence,  
that we may praise you now with our lips, in our hearts  
and all day long with our lives,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### 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

The word of God is living and active. It judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart. All is laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we give account. And so, we confess our sins in penitence and faith, thankful of the assurance of God's forgiveness.

Our God, for love of you we desire to hate and forsake all sins  
by which we have ever displeased you;  
and we resolve by the help of your grace  
to commit them no more;  
and to avoid all opportunities of sin.  
Help us to do this, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May God who loved the world so much that he sent his Son to be our Saviour  
forgive us our sins and make us holy to serve him in the world, through Jesus Christ our  
Lord. Amen.



## Readings

### **Matt 25: 31-46**

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

“He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

## Sermon

### The End!

Today is the last Sunday before Advent, also known as Christ the King.

And today’s Gospel once again gives us some insight into ‘the day of the Lord’ – the day when Jesus returns as Sovereign Lord and King over all things. Verse 31 tell us that



he will come in glory; all his angels will be with him; and he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.

No-one is going to be able to miss this event and over the last 2 Sundays we've thought about how we can be ready for it.

Last week I mentioned that how we live our lives matters, both now and eternally. Do we live them to show others what a good person we are (in other words we glorify ourselves) or do we live them to show others how good God is (in other words we glorify God)?

We live among many people who genuinely do good things for the good of others and to help them: and that is commendable but, even if they may be quite humble, they are the ones who take the credit for their actions. There is no mention of God as the motivation for the good they do.

The motivation for Christians should be different; and the real evidence of our Christian belief is the way we act towards others. We do not have the luxury of picking and choosing who we are good to. For us, as Christians, we are called to treat every single person who crosses our paths through life as if they are Jesus himself! That is certainly no easy task!

Our final parable helping us to prepare for the end of time as we know it, is all about action – namely action towards the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned. The characters in this parable are the King (Jesus in his glory) and all the nations (every one of us who has ever lived).

Right at the start we read that everybody is gathered before Jesus and then he separates them into 2 groups – only 2 groups! – just like a shepherd separated the sheep from the goats, who would normally graze together until the time for the sheep to be sheared.

And it seems to me that the answer to the motivation for our actions will determine which group we will find ourselves in when the great separation of all people, dead and alive, happens.

Will we be with the sheep – those who are Christ's obedient followers – or will we be with the goats – the pretenders and unbelievers?

The acts towards others that Jesus expects us to fulfil do not depend on wealth, ability or intelligence. They are things which we can all do every day. They are simple acts freely given and freely received.

Just as last week we said that we are responsible for using the talents God gives us, here too we have no excuse to neglect those who have deep needs. We can't hand over



this responsibility to the 'church' or the government, because Jesus demands our personal involvement in caring for others' needs.

Way back in Isaiah chapter 58 verse 7, God tells his people that they should be sharing their food with the hungry, providing the poor wanderer with shelter, clothing the naked. God has always wanted us to do these things – but always, too, for his glory, not ours!

Our parable today uses the word 'brothers' in verse 40 (quote) to point out who our actions should be aimed at: and over the years, there has been much discussion about the actual identity of the 'brothers'.

Some say it refers to the Jews: others say it refers to all Christians: still others say that the 'brothers' are suffering people everywhere. It's a bit like the lawyer's question, 'Who is my neighbour?'

However, the point of the parable is the importance of serving wherever service is needed to whoever needs it – and doing it because we love God and want to reveal his goodness to the world, not because we want people to think it's us who are good.

In Luke 18 Jesus says, 'No one is good except God alone' and our job is to deflect any glory that may come our way to God.

So, why is the motivation for our actions towards others so important?

Well, because the 2 groups are destined for 2 distinctly different places in eternity: and the knowledge of this separation and its' consequences is often one of the reasons why many people reject the Good News of Jesus Christ!

After all, how can it be Good News if God's going to do such drastic things on the last day?

What do we know about these 2 places?

Put simply, only the people who genuinely do good to others because of their love for God and desire to serve him above all things, and not to elevate themselves, will spend eternity with him – a place completely saturated with love and blessing and fulfilment: a place where there will be no room for any pain or tears or anguish - heaven.

Everybody else (and this is the hard bit to get our heads around), including those who did good things but without reference to the glory of God, will, in Jesus words, 'go away to eternal punishment' – hell.

We can accept more easily that murderers and abusers and the like will be going there, but not so much those we consider to be 'good' people.



Matthew, Mark, Luke, James and Revelation refer to hell as a place of eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil, his angels, and all those who refuse to repent and believe in God, as found in Jesus Christ.

This is serious stuff, and it's why we are told to preach the Gospel to all people and make disciples, because these 2 places are the final and only possible destinations for all of us come that final 'day of the Lord'.

So, when Jesus warns us against unbelief, he is trying to save us from eternal agonising punishment!

I really can't sugar coat this – except to say that Jesus is always for us and 'wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim 2: 4)

That's why our faith in Jesus can't be a 'private affair'. It's for all people and God gives us the job of sharing it so that come the final day heaven will be full to bursting with people glorifying God.

### **Creed**

Let us declare our faith in God:

**We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

### **Intercessions**

#### **Christ the King (2020)**

Christ our King, your justice embraces all people and calls us into a mutual fellowship of love and care.

Challenge your Church, of all denominations, to live out this concern in acts of compassion and liberation.

May we not be labelled with those who 'cross over to the other side' when a need presents itself: instead may we be actively alert to the many people and places where we can be distributors of your love and grace in practical ways. Give us an openness to welcome the stranger in peace and hospitality.



Give us courage, determination, and energy to be Christ to others in all circumstances for the glory of your Holy Name; because as we do to and for others, so we serve you.

**Lord in your mercy, Hear our Prayer**

Christ our King give to governments around the world, and all who rule in any sort of capacity, a deep concern for the needs of their people.

May there be a willingness to evenly distribute all wealth for the good of all.

We think of our government, and others, who have borrowed vast amounts of money during this pandemic in an effort to help the vulnerable and the poorest in our society. Give them wisdom as they continue to distribute funds, and, as they attempt to balance the books.

**Lord in your mercy, Hear our Prayer**

Christ our King, in you the thirsty find refreshment, the hungry are fed, the naked are clothed and prisoners visited.

In our community we know that many live in desperate circumstances, both in physical terms and spiritual. Many live constantly with addiction and abuse, having little, or no, hope for the future and, seemingly, no way out of the darkness they find themselves in. We cry out to you to have mercy on our patch and stir up in those who live here a longing for the things of God – so much so that they will begin seeking; and in their search will find you, the answer to the meaning of life, life in all its fullness. Use us in this process we pray.

**Lord in your mercy, Hear our Prayer**

Christ our King, the sick, the lame, and the infirm hold a special place in your concern. Give us grace to ensure that the care that is needed is provided. We name silently before you now those we know who are in need of your healing touch..... Take away any fear and anxiety and bring your wholeness to them in body, mind and spirit.

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen**

Let us now continue in prayer using the words our Saviour taught us:

**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 for ever. Amen.

### **Blessing**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord  
In the name of Christ. Amen.

