



Christ the King: 22nd November

Father God help us to come to you this morning with open and thankful hearts. Fill us with the joy and peace that comes with knowing you. Be with us as we walk in your light, rejoice in your love and reflect your glory.

Amen

Hymn 580: Rejoice the Lord is King

Welcome

The Lord be with you,
and also with you

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

Prayer of Confession

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: The first commandment is this: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself". There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.**

**We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen**

Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in life eternal through Jesus Christ our lord. **Amen**

Gloria

**Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

Collect for today:

Eternal Father, whose Son Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven that he might rule over all things as Lord and King: keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace, and bring the whole created order to worship at his feet; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Old Testament Reading: Ezekiel 34: 11 – 16, 20 - 24

For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the

mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.

Hymn 67: Be still for the presence of the Lord

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 25: 31 - 46*

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

Glory to you, O Lord

‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Then he will say to those at his left hand, “You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.” Then they also will answer, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?” Then he will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.” And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ

Sermon: Revd. Petra Shakeshaft

It's quite easy to have a fairly sweet view of the Biblical shepherd, leading sheep out on to green pastures, trotting down the hillsides to Bethlehem. In the Old Testament though, the image of the shepherd was used to denote the leadership of Israel, and in this reading from Ezekiel's prophesy, the shepherds are in trouble.

There are still surviving a number of ancient contracts between wealthy owners of large flocks and hired shepherds. This was normal practice in Biblical times and places. The hired shepherd managed a flock for a year; a mixed flock - of sheep and goats. The contract stipulated the expected return to the owner in terms of lambs, wool and cheese. Anything the shepherd made surplus to the contract, was his to keep. If there was a shortfall, he would be expected to make it up. Contracts made provision for losses as long as the shepherd could provide the skin of any dead animals.

Ezekiel's God is having a rant at the shepherds of Israel. The people have been taken into exile into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar; and God holds the leaders accountable.

You have been feeding yourselves -Should not shepherds feed the sheep?"

"You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool;

You slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the sheep.

He is furious because they have been lining their own pockets, and not taking care of those in their charge.

You have not strengthened the weak, he accuses them, you have not healed the sick, ... bound up the injured, ... brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them.

The shepherds have not kept to the terms of the contract and the sheep are suffering.

Of course, this is not about shepherds and contracts, but about Israel's leaders turning their back on the covenant with God. Forgetting who they are and what responsibilities they are charged with. The sheep are scattered and if they remain scattered, they will cease to be a flock. In terms of Israel, this means the fear that gradual assimilation into the habits and customs of the place of exile will lead to the loss of the unique traditions and identity of God's people Israel, so Israel, as a nation will cease to exist.

As the shepherd's contract binds the hired men to the owner of the sheep. So the covenant between God and Israel binds the people to God, and in the case of the leaders it is for the care and protection of the flock – the people.

We know that the pastoral responsibility of public office is an entitlement to serve- not for personal gain. We are hardwired to understand that, which is why we are so affronted when leaders screw the tax system, or award themselves massive pay increases or contracts to their cronies.

The leaders of Israel have been found out. It is clear from these same ancient documents that there also was a practice of inspection; the owners would come and check on their flocks. Shepherds were accountable and these shepherds have been found wanting. The sheep are abused, neglected and lost and the consequences for the shepherds ...they will be fed with justice.

So THE shepherd, the one to whom the sheep belong, has come to rescue them. He no longer trusts the hirelings.

I myself will search for my sheep. he says. In six verses God says *I will* thirteen times!
I will seek them out, I will feed them, I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep.

He promises to set over them one shepherd, *my servant David*

He shall feed them and be their shepherd and I, the Lord, will be their God.

The sheep will be gathered together again and set free from those who enslaved them.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus gives an apocalyptic vision of the Son of Man in glory surrounded by angels and seated on his throne. Again we have the shepherd metaphor – as he separates the people of the nations like a shepherd separates sheep and goats.

Matthew's Jesus uses Ezekiel's language about the righteous and the unrighteous...

The king says to those on his right, "When I was hungry you gave me food ... and to the left, "When I was hungry you gave me no food" To the right,

"when I was naked, you clothed me," and,

"When I was naked you did not give me clothing"

Exactly what Ezekiel's shepherds are accused of neglecting to do. Jesus adds a further twist to our models of judgement and justice – because neither the righteous nor the unrighteousness are aware of what they have done. Both ask *Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison ...?*

This King identifies not with the shepherds - or the leaders of Israel, but the scattered, neglected sheep; the hungry, the needy, the stranger, the sick, the prisoner. Jesus completely subverts our human understanding of Kingship and leadership and declares his common humanity through this divine apocalyptic image.

Today we celebrate Christ the King.

History is lettered with corrupt, self-serving leaders who abuse their power. This present generation is no exception. Those who dare to challenge are seen, at best, as naïve or unworldly and at worst as dangerous or subversive – as was Jesus, of course. These readings are a call to not only challenge poor or corrupt leadership, but to use our own power and privileges well; both politically in our voting, action and conversation, and practically - making what difference we can in our communities; sharing the responsibility for young and old and for those less fortunate, to do all we can to heal divisions and bring people together. The one Shepherd that God set over his people, Jesus, had the world at his fingertips and yet he chose to humble himself, taking the form of a servant, giving his life up for the sake of his sheep.

Had we been in church this morning, I have for each of you two little cards – one with a picture of this golden crown – the crown of kingship and the other, a crown of thorns, the crown that Jesus wore.



Leadership is nothing more, nothing less than service;
That's the privilege.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers Sue Lowdell

Let us pray:

Lord of life, we pray for our families, for our friends and their families, for our church family, for those whom we love who are nearby and those whom we are unable to meet together at present due to lock down. We are weary after so many months of the pandemic; the hopes and then the fears as the virus which had appeared to be under control, and which has returned once again, but this time the days are shorter and colder and the prospect of the winter ahead brings concern to many. There is the hope of a vaccine and there is you, Heavenly Father, you are our one unchanging light; you bring comfort and hope where it is most needed and we give thanks for your presence in our lives.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Lord of all, we pray for peace in our world. We pray for all who work for peace and those who uphold law and justice for all people. We pray for an end to fear, for comfort and support to those who suffer, for calm in our streets so that people may go about their lives in safety. We pray for the United States of America at this time. We pray that they will come together and that they will be able to heal their divisions as the outcome of the presidential election becomes clearer. It is hard to accept when feelings are so entrenched, but there is so much healing that can come from

letting go and in the end the wellbeing of everyone is really what matters most. Your presence dear Lord is their peace and comfort; your nearness is their hope.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Dear Lord, we pray for our country, for our Queen and for our Government. This year has brought so much tension and worry and the men and women responsible for governing us are also under considerable strain. We pray for them as they find a safe pathway for our country through this extraordinary time and that they too will find hope and peace.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Merciful God, we pray for the elderly and for the many challenges they face at this time. We pray for those who may be lonely, ill or sad and we pray for all those in care homes throughout the country and for their families, some of whom have been unable to see their loved ones for many months. We pray for everyone in Orchard House; and all those working so hard to keep them safe. We pray for Age UK, our home charity for this quarter, and for the support they bring to the elderly. Please be with them all dear Lord and give them your peace.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

We bring to you Heavenly Father the congregations at St Mary's and at St Peter's. Please shine your light on the Ministry Team as they bring your teaching and love, and the opportunity for us all to come together in your name. We pray for Petra and her family, for our Church Wardens, the members of our PCC and for our sub-committees. We pray for 'Open Church' and 'Muddy Church' and for the opportunity to reach out to our community and to fulfil a need at this difficult time.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Dear Lord we pray for those we know who are ill, please give them ease and comfort. We pray for Isobel, Janet, Mary and Margaret and for their families... We pray for all those who are seriously ill with coronavirus and for those undergoing treatment for cancer and heart disease and other serious conditions... we hold them all up to you, dear Lord.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

We pray for all those who have died and the families who mourn and who miss the companionship of those who were so dear to them. We remember before God all those who have died in the First and Second World Wars and in all the conflicts and wars since then...

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Heavenly Father, please help us to live together in a way that brings glory to your name. May the word of Christ dwell in us. What we do, in word or deed, may we do everything in the name of Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, the Father – 'for thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen'.

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

The Peace:

Take a moment and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for each other and our church family church community. Maybe call or text someone who would enjoy sharing the peace with you.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy, that you may be kept safe and blameless in spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Hymn 56: At the name of Jesus

Lord's Prayer

**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.

Hymn 649: The King of love

Remembering the Lord's Supper:

Take a moment to remember the final meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. As we think about this meal - with the washing of feet and bread and wine shared with friends - we remember Jesus' offering of himself on the cross. We rejoice in his resurrection from the dead and look forward to the coming of God's Kingdom. While we cannot receive Christ in the sacraments in the usual way, we can be the presence of Christ in our homes and communities and we can be a praying presence wherever we are.

Hymn 137: Crown him with many crowns

Closing Prayer:

Lord God, we thank you for this time of worship; may your love and peace remain with us in the coming days. Be with us in all that we will think, say and do so that our lives may reflect your glory. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ. Amen

If you have any prayer or pastoral needs, please don't hesitate to contact

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