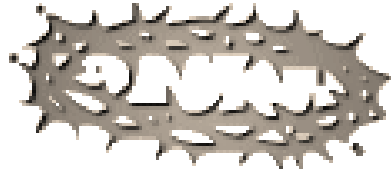


A Service of the Word for 22nd November



Welcome and Opening Responses

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe.
You have given us a share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Open our eyes to behold your glory
and free our tongues to join their song:

**Great and wonderful are your deeds, Lord God almighty;
just and true are your ways, King of the ages.
To you be praise and glory, now and for ever. Amen.**

Prayers of Penitence

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'
So let us turn away from sin and turn to Christ,
confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

Mark 1.14

**O King enthroned on high, filling the earth with your glory:
holy is your name, Lord God almighty.
In our sinfulness we cry to you to take our guilt away,
and to cleanse our lips to speak your word,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Absolution

May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Collect

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. **Amen.**

Psalm 90.1-8, 11,12

- 1 Lord, you have been our refuge ◆
from one generation to another.
- 2 **Before the mountains were brought forth, or the earth and the world were formed, ◆ from everlasting to everlasting you are God.**
- 3 You turn us back to dust and say: ◆
'Turn back, O children of earth.'
- 4 **For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday, ◆ which passes like a watch in the night.**
- 5 You sweep them away like a dream; ◆
they fade away suddenly like the grass.
- 6 **In the morning it is green and flourishes; ◆ in the evening it is dried up and withered.**
- 7 For we consume away in your displeasure; ◆
we are afraid at your wrathful indignation.
- 8 **You have set our misdeeds before you ◆ and our secret sins in the light of your countenance.**

11 Who regards the power of your wrath ◆
and your indignation like those who fear you?

12 **So teach us to number our days ◆
that we may apply our hearts to wisdom**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit: **As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.**

Reading Gospel

Alleluia, alleluia. Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven. **Alleluia.**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to **Matthew 25.31-46. Glory to you, O Lord.**

Jesus said to his disciples: ³¹“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. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴Then 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; ³⁵for 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, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” ³⁷Then 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? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” ⁴⁰And 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.” ⁴¹Then 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; ⁴²for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and

you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I 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.” ⁴⁴Then 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?” ⁴⁵Then 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.” ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’

At the end the reader says:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection

This is a really powerful reading for me. The first time I heard this read, that week I was asked to consider working at Her Majesty’s Prison and Young Offenders Institution (HMP YOI) Guys Marsh near Shaftsbury. As quick as I was to say no; when I heard this reading the following Sunday I felt rather challenged. “³⁵*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, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.*” It would seem that I had not rejected a job, but a calling from God.

As you know I did eventually follow this calling and spent several very happy years in prison. I really felt that this was what God wanted of me, to “visit” those in prison, although often I was more ministered to than the minister, and I met several people who hugely influenced my life and my ministry today. Much of what I learnt about love and God’s compassionate embrace comes from my time in the prison.

However not everyone gets the chance to fulfil the visiting the prisoner brief from this passage, however we can all, ALL, feed those who are hungry and thirsty. That is why the Reverse Advent calendar is so good.

In case you have not read about it yet, the plan is that as you travel through Advent instead of just eating chocolate every day, you have a large box, and put in every day one thing that is either dried or tinned food. (Or maybe sometimes something like shampoo or soap). At Christmas you will have a huge box of essentials to give to the Food Bank in Penzance. Traditionally in January the Food bank struggles to meet demand as the individuals and families face the challenges of keeping warm dry and fed in January and February when there is little work. So, gifts of these just after Christmas would be really helpful. Our Worship Leader Michelle Brown is the new Chair of the Foodbank and can give you further details.

So you can obey the call of God, to feed those who hunger and thirst, but we can also “visit the sick” too, perhaps not in person but a phone call or a letter to those who are sick and in need, but also those who are sick of the confinement of the lockdown, sick of being brave and not being able to see loved ones and friends, sick of not singing or celebrating or even just being able to Christmas shop in person. We can all help here.

What about those who thirst? Yes literally those who need a drink, but what about those who thirst for knowledge or for a chance to be allowed to make different choices. What about those who thirst for the ability to read and write, to be able to understand their finances. Or those whose thirst is for someone to share their life with this year. How might we be able to respond?

Jesus reminds the listeners in the story today, that often God is found in weird places, within those who others might dismiss. The lonely, the sick, the hungry, the thirsty, the prisoners were the places where God is found. How often do we turn away from need, perhaps being fatigued from caring, but still we turn away from those whose need is known and recognised by God.

When the lonely strangers pray for a friend,

You can be the answer to the prayer made to God.

When the sick prays for a visit,

You can be the answer to the prayer made to God.

When the naked prays for warm clothes,
You can be the answer to the prayer made to God.
When the hungry pray for food,
You can be the answer to the prayer made to God.
When the thirsty pray for respite,
You can be the answer to the prayer made to God.
When the prisoner prays for recognition of their humanity, even
then,
You can be the answer to the prayer made to God.
For it is You and I that are the means of God's working in this world,
and God calls us to give ourselves to His service, to show His love and
to care with His heart.
So are you going to spend Advent as a goat or a sheep? Your choice!

The Creed

Let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Though he was divine, he did not cling to equality with God, but made himself nothing. Taking the form of a slave, he was born in human likeness. He humbled himself and was obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God has raised him on high, and given him the name above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

cf Philippians 2.6-11

Prayers of Intercession Christ the King: written by John Iles

Heavenly Father, in the midst of this pandemic, we come to you in gratitude for the week that is past; we are humbled by the blessings that you give us; for the joys and trials that the week has brought; for the guidance and strength you have given us; for the delight we have felt in serving others and for the peace and tranquillity that we have found in this place.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Lord, help us to live our lives as encouraged by Pope Pius XI; may we allow Christ to reign in our minds and believe in his doctrines; reign in our wills and obey his laws; reign in our hearts to love Him above all things and reign in our bodies to serve as His instruments.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Encourage us, Lord to be a caring church throughout this pandemic; create in us the will to identify the mental strains and suffering which it brings to many people; may we emerge stronger in faith and more able to deal with the challenges which lie ahead; guide our Archbishop Justin, our Bishop Philip, Vanda our Rector and all our clergy that they may be inspired to celebrate our faith with imagination and determination.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Merciful Father, we remember today those who do not have the resources to provide for themselves; we pray for the work of the food banks who supply vital life giving support to those in need; we remember too the wave of migrant families fleeing conflict, oppression and persecution who are being tossed like flotsam around the world in their quest to find sanctuary in our country; Father, help us to look into our hearts and respond in whatever way we can to improve the plight of others

Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Today is traditionally Stir up Sunday – the day on which Christmas puddings were made; Father in heaven, stir up in us the desire to be your constant disciples; rescue us from the powers of darkness; make us steadfast in your power to endure all things with patience and instil in us the image of the invisible God.

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

The Lord's Prayer

In confidence let us pray for the coming of the kingdom among us.

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. And 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.

Final Prayer and Blessing

God the Father, help us to hear the call of Christ the King and to follow in his service, whose kingdom has no end; for he reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, one glory. Amen.

Christ our King make you faithful and strong to do his will, that you may reign with him in glory; and may the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

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