

The First Sunday before Advent (Kingship of Christ) - YEAR B 22 November 2015

As the Liturgical Year comes to an end, we are reminded, one last time, of the focus of Christ's life, which is also our calling – the Reign of God. It is tempting to view Christ's Reign as a conquering, all-powerful, phenomenon that will violently destroy human power systems, but that would be to misunderstand it. Rather, what the Lectionary reveals is a Reign that is not of this world, that is a completely different reality, and that works within human systems, even as it subverts them toward justice, peace and love.

May our worship remind us of this eternal, "otherworldly" Reign of God and enable us to open our hearts to receive it right here and now where we live.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

2 Samuel 23:1-7: David's last words, celebrating the beauty of the one who rules righteously, and remembering God's covenant with David and his family. This is all in contrast with godless people whose lives are wasted.

OR **Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14**: Daniel shares his vision of God's throne, and the One – "like a son of man" - who comes in glory on the clouds and who is given all authority and whose kingdom never ends.

Psalms 132:1-12 (13-18): A Psalm in remembrance of David's quest to build a Temple for God, God's promise to David of an eternal dynasty, and God's choice of Jerusalem as God's "home".

OR **Psalms 93**: God is the Monarch, clothed in majesty, with an eternal throne and a reign that will last forever.

Revelation 1:4b-8: Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, the first to rise from death, and the ruler of all kings. He has freed us by shedding his blood and has made us a kingdom of priests. He is the beginning and the end, and will be seen by all people when he comes with the clouds of heaven.

John 18:33-37: Pilate asks Jesus if he is the king of the Jews. Jesus replies that his kingdom is not of this world. When Pilate seeks to confirm that he is a king, Jesus cryptically replies that it is Pilate who says so, but that he came into the world to testify to the truth.

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord,
the wills of thy faithful people;
that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works,
may of thee be plenteously rewarded;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Eternal Father,
whose Son Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven

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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 and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH 1

- P** Jesus, until Your glorious return on the Last Day, bless Your Word wherever it is proclaimed. Make it a word of power and peace to convert those not yet Your own and to confirm those who have come to saving faith. May your Word pass from the ear to the heart, from the heart to the lip, and from the lip to the life, that, as You have promised, Your Word may achieve the purpose for which You sent it; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
- C** **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**
- P** Almighty and most gracious God and Father, we implore You to turn the hearts of all who have forsaken the faith once delivered to Your Church, especially those who have wandered from it or are in doubt through the corruption of Your truth. Mercifully visit them and restore them that in gladness of heart they may take pleasure in Your Word and be made wise to salvation; through faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord.
- C** **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**
- P** Almighty and gracious God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, You have commanded us to pray that You would send forth laborers into Your harvest. Of Your infinite mercy give us true teachers and ministers of Your Word who truly fulfill Your command and preach nothing contrary to Your holy Word. May we, being warned, instructed, nurtured, comforted, and strengthened by Your holy Word, do those things which are well-pleasing to You and profitable for our salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
- C** **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**
- P** Eternal Lord, ruler of all, graciously regard those who have been set in positions of authority among us that, guided by Your Spirit, they may be high in purpose, wise in counsel, firm in good resolution, and unwavering in duty, that under them we may be governed quietly and peaceably; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
- C** **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**
- P** Lord of heaven and earth, as we know both from history and current events, there are and have been wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, droughts, and famines in various places. Grant us peaceful hearts in the midst of uncertain times knowing that these are but the beginning of birth pangs. Protect us from the teachings of those who would announce a date for the end of all things, comforted by Your Word that assures us that no one knows the day or the hour but only You, the Father; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
- C** **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**
- P** O Lord God, You create and sustain life as a good and precious gift from Your gracious hand. Provide clean water and nourishing food through relief and human care agencies around the world. Enable and embolden us to speak up to defend life

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from the womb to natural death. By the example of Your blessed Son, grant the sick (*especially* _____) grace to accept patiently the sufferings of the present time in full assurance of the glory that shall be revealed to us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

P Lord Jesus, You invite all who are burdened with sin to come to You for rest. We now come at Your invitation to the heavenly feast which You have provided for Your children on earth. Preserve us from impenitence and unbelief, cleanse us from our unrighteousness, and clothe us with the righteousness purchased with Your blood. Strengthen our faith, increase our love and hope, and assure us a place at Your heavenly table, where we will eat eternal manna and drink of the river of Your pleasure forever and ever; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

P All these things and whatever else You know that we need, grant us, Father, for the sake of Him who died and rose again and now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever.

C Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH 2

A: Faith alone reveals the truth that cynical questioning cannot. Pilate, who sought to rule and pass judgment by inquiry, failed to learn that Jesus was the embodiment of God and ruler over all. In faith we ask, "Come, O Christ, reign over us," and respond, "Let your truth prevail."

A: That the national churches of the world may learn how best to work together in partnership to win the world to Christ. Come, O Christ, reign over us.

C: Let your truth prevail.

A: That in a day when governments and businesses speak of globalisation, they may further recognize the simultaneous fracturing of the world by nationalism, tribalism, and individual concerns, and promote humanity's true community. Come, O Christ, reign over us.

C: Let your truth prevail.

A: That the youth of our church may sincerely address the question of how they shall be faithful to Christ and his church, teach them by your Spirit to say: Come, O Christ, reign over us.

C: Let your truth prevail.

A: That our congregation may be faithful in serving residents of the lodges and extended care centres of our cities and towns. Free us to share the gospel message and enjoy the Eucharist among them, we pray: Come, O Christ, reign over us.

C: Let your truth prevail.

A: That *Christian Aid, Bishops Appeal etc* care for the hungry, the naked, the sick, the oppressed, and those in any way distressed. Come, O Christ, reign over us.

C: Let your truth prevail.

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The following may be said:

A: Forgive us when we become accustomed to the shame and distress of those afflicted by lesser standards of living, so that we do nothing and care little for our neighbors in the world. With repentant hearts we say: Come, O Christ, reign over us.

C: Let your truth prevail.

P: O ruling Lord, we commend all to your keeping and empowerment for true faith, love and service.

C: Amen.

POST COMMUNION

Stir up, O Lord,
the wills of your faithful people;
that plenteously bearing the fruit of good works
they may by you be plenteously rewarded;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

Shepherd of Israel, hear our prayer
as your Son heard the plea
of the criminal crucified with him.
Gather into Christ's holy reign
the broken, the sorrowing, and the sinner,
that all may know
wholeness, joy, and forgiveness. Amen.

As the shepherd who cares for the flock, O God,
you guide all things through Jesus
whom you have exalted over all creation as king.
Hear the prayers we offer in his name
for the creation he cherished
and that you entrust to us.
Look upon your people who rejoice in your justice and mercy,
and grant that the prayers we make
may reveal Christ's reign in our time. Amen.

Almighty God,
you remembered the oath you swore to David
and so established a glorious realm of salvation
through Jesus of Nazareth, his heir.
Train our eyes to see your righteous rule,
that, standing firmly in hope
before the powers of this world,
we may heed your voice
and be constant in your truth. Amen.

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Most High God, majestic and almighty,
our beginning and our end:
rule in our hearts
and guide us to be faithful in our daily actions,
worshiping the one who comes
as Saviour and Sovereign,
and who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God. Amen.

LECTIONARY NOTES

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

The Reign of God has always been a central focus of the worship of God's people. From the time of the promise to David of an eternal dynasty, the vision of the Reign of God's Monarch has been the hope of God's people. Yet, the challenge has always been to understand God's Reign as of a completely different order from human power systems. In Samuel and in Psalm 132, the "descendant of David" is contrasted with godless people whose lives are wasted, and is associated with worship and God's presence. In Daniel and in Psalm 93, the Reign of God is depicted as glorious and authoritative, but also as being manifest through one who is "like a son of man". In Revelation this one is seen as Jesus, who is revealed in glory, and whose sacrifice is seen as the primary act in bringing God's Reign into the world. Finally, in the encounter between Jesus and Pilate, the difference between human rulership and God's Reign is starkly shown, as Jesus explains that he claims no human kingship, but is the king of a realm that is not of this world. It is a kingdom of truth and justice. The challenge of this week's celebration is to avoid triumphalism. We are not to make God's Reign out to be the same as human power systems, only stronger, more dominant, and longer lasting. Rather, we are to recognise God's Reign in acts of compassion and justice, in service and sacrifice, and in the challenge to human systems to give up their obsession with war and conquest in order to build a world of peace and love for all.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

Global Application:

The celebration of Christ the King raises two issues for us as followers of Christ:

1. The issue of authority: Jesus cannot be followed while retaining our own agendas. As we follow Christ, we are called to embrace His agenda. In our striving for justice, equity and a better world, there remains the need to proclaim the eternal kingdom of God, and to call people, leaders and communities to faith and to submission to the authority and priorities of Christ (which is not the same thing as the Church).
2. The issue of the nature of God's Reign: The glory of God is revealed not in conquest or power-over, but in sacrifice and service. God's Reign is not "of this world" – it is a completely different reality that exists within, and subverts, the power systems of the world. Therefore, in our quest for justice, we must be careful not to get drawn into competitive power games in which only some can win, while others lose. Rather, we need to constantly hold ourselves faithful to the service and sacrifice of Christ, to the welcome and inclusivity of Christ, and to the love of Christ for all – even our enemies.

Local Application:

In our own communities and lives, it is easy to set up our own little kingdoms – even when we're doing good, or working for justice. It is easy to get caught up in purely human

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agendas and priorities, but ultimately these will all fail us. So, as we seek to live out our faith in compassion and justice, we need also to embody the priorities of Jesus, and call people to higher, eternal values. This means that we relinquish the need to get our way all the time. It means refusing to co-operate with any systems or courses of action that oppress or reject some people. It means committing to the serving and sacrificial nature of God's Reign within our families, churches and neighbourhoods. And it means keeping Christ as both the object of our worship (as opposed to our own desires, agendas or needs) and the model on which we base our lives. It is only when we are willing to commit daily to these values that we can truly claim to be worshipping Christ as King.

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 God, now and for ever. Amen
Common Worship

God, our refuge and strength, bring near the day when wars shall cease and poverty and pain shall end, that earth may know the peace of heaven through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Common Worship Shorter Collect

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.
Common Worship Shorter Collect

MEDITATION

We are now reaching the end of the Church's year. With the beginning of Advent, we begin again the cycle of the birth of Jesus, his ministry, his death, Passion and resurrection.

The ending of a year is a good time to assess where we have been, what has been achieved, and perhaps most importantly, where we are going with our journey of faith.

If, when we look at our spiritual lives, we feel that we have made no real progress, perhaps it is time to embark on more regular Bible study. Perhaps joining a house group would give you the support you need for growth? Perhaps you would like to put your faith into some kind of action, helping missionary work or community projects.

New beginnings are always exciting, offering us the challenge of new spiritual adventures and development.

SERMON OUTLINE 1

["The Truth,"](#) Frederick Buechner Sermon Illustrations.

John 18: 33 - 37. Pilate asks "What is truth?" and for years there have been politicians, scientists, theologians, philosophers, poets, and so on to tell him. The sound they make is like the sound of crickets chirping.

Jesus doesn't answer Pilate's question. He just stands there. *Stands*, and stands *there*.
<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-truth>

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

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["Leaving Home,"](#) Rev. Dr. Tripp Martin, *Day 1*

John 18: 33 - 37. From the beginning of the Gospel of John to its very end, people are concerned with where Jesus is from because they are concerned about who he is.

http://day1.org/4266-leaving_home

["Redeeming Kingship,"](#) the Very Rev. Anthony F.M. Clavier, *Sermons that Work*

There is something else rather odd about the title given to Jesus in today's feast. The word "christ" is the equivalent, at least to the ears of non-Jewish, first-century Christians, of "lord" or "emperor." Neither of these titles seem enlightened or modern. How odd to have a Feast of "The King, the King"!

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2012/11/12/christ-the-king-b-nov-25-2012/>

["Jesus and Leadership,"](#) Christ the King Sunday, Ken Carter, *Faith and Leadership*

On Christ the King Sunday, the church is called to resist the same temptation that faced Christ, the temptation to adopt the leadership strategy of Herod

<https://www.faithandleadership.com/sermons/jesus-and-leadership>

["The Servant King with Scars,"](#) Bishop Ronald Warren, *Day 1*

John 18: 33 - 37. Looking back over history, some historians estimate that the average length of a reign for a queen or a king is only 3½ to 4 years. And for the most part, royalty has had a violent, murderous history throughout the centuries. Ironically, from the earliest days of the infant, persecuted church, the crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth was given the title "King of Kings."

http://day1.org/1019-the_servant_king_with_scars

["Thanksgiving in Three Tenses,"](#) the Rev. Dr. Wiley Stephens, *Day 1*

How many times have we prayed: Thy kingdom come? The concept of God's kingdom is woven so tightly into the fabric of our faith. But who designs his kingdom? What kind of king rules?

http://day1.org/489-thanksgiving_in_three_tenses

CHILDREN

[Worshiping with Children,](#) Reign of Christ B, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown,.

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2012/11/year-b-proper-29-reign-of-christ-or.html>

["Crayons over Crowns,"](#) Frances Woodruff, *On the Chancel Steps*

<https://onthechancelsteps.wordpress.com/2012/11/12/crayons/>

["Christ the King Sunday,"](#) Dianne Deming, *Children's Sermons Today*

<http://childrenssermonstoday.blogspot.co.uk/2012/11/christ-king-sunday-revelation-1-4-8.html>

[Story for Children's Worship and Family Activity,](#) Christ the King, at word-sunday.com: A Catholic Resource for the Lectionary by Larry Broding.

<http://www.word-sunday.com/index.html>

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HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[Jesus Shall Reign](#)
[O Worship The King](#)
[Sing We The King](#)
[Rejoice, The Lord Is King](#)
[How Great Is Our God](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)
[Above All](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)
[Ancient Of Days](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)
[Who Is Like You](#)
[The Lord Reigns](#)

See also - Oremus - scroll to very bottom of the list
<http://www.oremus.org/hymnal/yearb.html>

Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to churchnewsireland@gmail.com with the message Passwords in the title