



**Worship
resources -
includes sermon
outlines**

INTRODUCTIONS

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

Ezekiel 34 : 11-16, 20-24

David had been the great Shepherd-King, and the Jews longed for another King like him.

Today's Gospel will pick up the thought of the King as Shepherd. We hear first from

Ezekiel, preparing for a divine intervention into history, speaking of God himself as the gatherer of his flock into safety, under a worthy successor to David.

Psalm 100

Ephesians 1 : 15-23

Paul's great hymn of prayer and praise extols the power of God at work in all the faithful, and the Lord Jesus Christ raised up as king over all things.

Matthew 25 : 31-46

Jesus speaking about the end of time, and the kingly power that will be seen in the coming of the Son of Man. He reveals what the standard of judgement will be for entry into this kingdom - either we did, or did not, care for him as we find him in the needy.

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord,
the wills of thy faithful people;

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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
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 PEOPLE 1

Let us pray to the Lord our God, who seeks the lost sheep, binds up the injured, and strengthens the weak.

For N our bishop and N our rector, for this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

Lord, have mercy.

For the leaders of the nations and all in authority, and for mercy, justice, and peace among all peoples.

Lord, have mercy.

For good weather, abundant fruits of the earth, and peaceful times.

Lord, have mercy.

For our city/town/parish and those who live in it, and for our families, companions, and all those we love.

Lord, have mercy.

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For all those in danger and need: the hungry and the thirsty, strangers and the naked, the sick and those in prison.

Lord, have mercy.

For those who rest in Christ.

Lord, have mercy.

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.

Lord, have mercy.

Lifting our voices with all creation, and with all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. To you, O Lord.

God our shepherd, who raised your Son from the dead and made him king of all creation, hear the prayers we offer this day and enable us to see your glory in the face of the poor; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

P Lord Jesus Christ, blessed are You, the Judge who comes to set Your people free. Reign over us in Your abundant compassion and mercy. Hear our prayer, O Lord, and give ear to our cry;

C **Come, Lord Jesus!**

P We thank You, O Lord Jesus, for giving us the end of another Church Year. While we long for Your final advent, we rejoice that You lengthen these last days so that many would hear of Your saving work and believe. Send Your Spirit on Your Church that we may use this precious gift of time by faithfully confessing You, the Savior for all people. Hear our prayer, O Lord, and give ear to our cry;

C **Come, Lord Jesus!**

P Lord of Truth, defend all who are imprisoned and reviled because of Your name. Encourage all faithful missionaries and their families, in this land and throughout the world. Open their lips to proclaim You and Your powerful Word of forgiveness and life to all people. Hear our prayer, O Lord, and give ear to our cry;

C **Come, Lord Jesus!**

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P King Jesus, Lord of the Church, continue to give us the gifts of pastors, teachers, and other church workers that Your kingdom of grace may flourish. Bless and preserve them that they faithfully serve Your Church. Hear our prayer, O Lord, and give ear to our cry;

C Come, Lord Jesus!

P Lord Christ, Ruler over all things, look with mercy on this land, its government and all the nations of the world. Preserve us from war, bloodshed, and rebellion. Protect all pregnant mothers and their unborn children. Grant us, if it is Your will, good weather, and protect those caught in storms and cold. Bless and uphold the work of LCMS World Relief in bringing Your mercy to the hungry, hurting, and homeless. Hear our prayer, O Lord, and give ear to our cry;

C Come, Lord Jesus!

P Great Physician of body and soul, pour out the peace You won on those who have troubled hearts; those who are sick or injured in body (*including _____*); those who mourn (*including _____*); those whose cries come before you in any need. Visit and relieve them according to Your mercy. Hear our prayer, O Lord, and give ear to our cry;

C Come, Lord Jesus!

P Lord Jesus, as we long for Your final Advent, prepare those who commune this day to receive Your coming among us through Your body and blood, that they may meet You in repentance of their sinfulness and with joy in Your rescue. Hear our prayer, O Lord, and give ear to our cry;

C Come, Lord Jesus!

P Father, Into Your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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

Lord of the past and the future: we thank you for the last Church Year. We thank you for the fellowship and joy of our worship together as a community. We pray for the coming year, that we may benefit from the teaching and wisdom of the church and grow in faith and knowledge of You, **Amen**.

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*.

Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people, that they bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by you be richly rewarded: through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen (*Common Worship*)

Lord Jesus, Christ the King. all honour and glory belong to you. Help us to worship you as our Lord of majesty and truth. In this world hold us in the love and protection of your kingdom where you live and reign in the glory of God the Father.

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.

You raised up your Son, O God,
and seated him at your right hand
as the shepherd and king
who seeks what is lost,
binds up what is wounded,
and strengthens what is weak.
Empowered by the Spirit,
grant that we may share with others

that which we have received from your hand,
to the honor of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God,
your power was revealed
when you raised Christ from the dead
and seated him at your right hand.
Grant that we may always give you thanks
for your immeasurable love
and show that gratitude in loving service
to all our brothers and sisters
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

O God,
in Jesus Christ we celebrate your power at work.
You raised him from the dead
to rule with you forevermore.
Enlighten the eyes of our hearts,
that we may see the hope
to which Christ calls us,
a realm of eternal peace. Amen.

Meditation 1

Today we commemorate the feast of Christ the King. The celebration of the day only entered the church's calendar in the Twentieth century but it has become a valuable part of our preparations for Advent. On this day we recall Jesus in His eternal aspect, as King and Ruler, rather than as He was in his earthly life.

The understanding of Jews was that the primary function of kingship was to sit in judgement and to administer justice.

The image of Christ the King in the Gospel today is awe-inspiring and intimidating. Jesus will be enthroned in majesty and all the peoples of the earth will be required to stand before Him awaiting judgement. The Lord will divide everyone into two camps, those who are saved and those who are not. It is a stark and frightening thought. There will be no time for excuses or explanations. Each person at the end of his or her life will be judged on the deeds they have done.

We are accustomed to think of Jesus in his earthly life, as a loving, mild and thoughtful person, always tolerant and forgiving. This warning of the final judgement presents an image of Jesus as a stern but fair judge. The reading

from Ezekiel sets the Gospel in the context of a beautiful description of God as a good shepherd, loving and vigilant, eternally watching over us, his sheep. *The Reverend Dr Joan Crossley*

Meditation 2

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.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24:

- This is a great passage, and goes so well with the gospel lesson for today. What vivid images of God as our shepherd!
- God's preference is clear: "I will see the lost . . . I will strengthen the weak," and "the fat and the strong I will destroy." Which kind of sheep are you? Compare this to Jesus' teachings about who he came to serve.
- "I will feed them with justice." What does it mean to be fed with justice? How do you feed your life with justice? Does working for God's justice in the world fill you up?
- "It is God that made us, and we are [God's]; we are [God's] people, and the sheep of [God's] pasture." Again, imagery of being sheep in God's fold. We *belong* to God. We humans have a great need to belong. The best we can belong to is God.

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- "Worship the Lord with gladness." How do you worship? Do you find joy in your worship? Meaning? How do you keep from "going through the motions" of worship?
- "Give thanks." This is a season of Thanks-giving. How do you give thanks? Giving thanks involves more than words - "giving" is an *action* word. How do you *take action* to give thanks?

Ephesians 1:15-23:

- I especially like the first part of this passage, verses 15-19. These verses sound like great words of blessing to speak on someone, a person of faith. To pray that God grants wisdom and revelation, enlightenment, riches of Christ's inheritance, knowledge of the immeasurable greatness of God's power. . .
- Aside from that, this passage seems very typical of a lot of the epistle writing. Here is set up the metaphor: Christ as the head of the church and of the body, the church as the body of Christ, and thus under Christ, who is over all things, filling all things.

Matthew 25:31-46:

- What passage in the gospels best describes the standards by which we gain eternal life? This passage tells us that it is our *actions*, not our *words*, that determines our eternal being. Do your words and actions match? What do your actions say about what you really believe?
- Where have you seen Christ in unusual ways? Where have you seen Christ where you have not expected? Do you think others see Christ in you?
- We often think of poverty and hunger and need far away from us. Where do poverty and hunger and need exist right in your own community? Why is it easier to see need far-away than at home?

By Beth Quick

SERMON OUTLINE

In the passage this morning we hear the last teaching which Matthew records from Jesus, so we should expect it to be important. It is about the judgement of all people. We should perhaps begin by recognising the plight of the poor old goat. The sheep get all the praise and it seems as though Jesus is always getting at goats. Of course, goats are not worse animals than sheep. Shepherds separated sheep from the goats because sheep tolerate cold better than goats, so shepherds put goats in a protected spot while the sheep continued to forage. The readers of the book of Matthew would be familiar with the image, they would have seen Shepherds separate sheep and goats.

Using this language was also helpful at the time because the word sheep was often used as a metaphor for the people of God. Likewise the Messiah was often spoken of as a shepherd.

This metaphorical and figurative language has throughout Christian history been taken very literally. The image is portrayed of Jesus sitting on a cloud at some point at the end of human history. The whole of humanity is lined up with Jesus sorting out two groups, one side going through the pearly gates to eternal bliss, the other miserable offenders are sent off to eternal damnation, in the same way that Jews were despatched to the torture and human ovens of the concentration camps.

Leaving such nonsense aside, what is the point that Jesus is making? Matthew appears to be concluding the teaching of Jesus in His gospel, by recording these words which show that Jesus was serious about expecting lives to be changed by the teaching. It wasn't just for fun, God notices what goes on. God thinks that the lives we lead here on earth are of consequence, and so our behaviour has serious consequences. The way in which we treat others has importance to God, he takes note and there is judgement.

Jesus is using a picture which was familiar to his hearers to illustrate the fact that good and bad behaviour is different and is judged. Jews grew up familiar with the image of the Messiah as somebody who would come and judge humanity and separate them as a shepherd separated the sheep from the goats. Of course they expected that the sheep would be the Jews of Israel, and the goats would be everybody else. Jesus tells his hearers that they are in for a surprise. There is going to be judgement, but the criteria for good and bad has changed! From now on the basis for being in God's good books was to be based on the teachings of Jesus and obedience to them. If people wanted to be a part of the Kingdom of God then there was a sure fire way of ensuring success, treat your neighbour the way that you would wish to be treated.

Jesus mentions six deeds of mercy. They are not meant to be comprehensive, rather they show that Jesus is concerned by specific material acts of kindness towards the needy. This might sound like the teaching of a British monk, Pelagius, who ended up being branded a heretic. However it is the authentic teaching of Jesus who does not demand supernatural or spiritual exercises, just simple unobtrusive charity. Spiritual talent can easily be counterfeit, charity might appear more mundane, but it is much more

easily recognised and accordingly is a better test of faith. We are faced by many opportunities to help the needy. These acts of kindness can be provided by anybody, we need not have wealth to offer ourselves. To visit, to care, such things all are within reach of everybody.

In the story Jesus tells that those who are rewarded are surprised, because they had no idea that their acts of kindness were noticed by God. They were motivated only by mercy, not by greed for reward. It has been suggested that Jesus only wanted us to be kind to other Christians, but Jesus was never selective in his care for others and he even encouraged Christians to care for their enemies. Some theologians become quite animated at the thought that people appear to be earning salvation through simple acts of kindness and charity, but to do so is to miss the point of the teaching of Jesus.

Jesus is not speaking about a literal point of judgement in the future history of the world. Rather Jesus is stressing the need for us to take seriously his teaching on the importance of right behaviour now. In so much as people show kindness and mercy, they demonstrate the presence of God within them and live by the standards of the kingdom. Through their behaviour they make themselves citizens of that kingdom of Jesus today, they are one of Christ's sheep.

The faithful will see everyone as a brother or sister in Christ and will respond to the need to care for all God's children. By their deeds they will walk in the way of Jesus, will be in relationship with him, a part of his family. The unfaithful will only look after themselves and will find Christ to be far from them. It is self determining. If we embrace the teaching of Jesus as our King then we become part of his kingdom now, not at some judgement at the end of time. So we find the kingdom to give meaning in our lives and we know not only the joy of considering the needs of others, but the delight of serving the King.

So for us, we know that we are called to the service of others, we are also called to work to change oppressive systems and human structures that fail to serve the needy and work against relieving troubled lives and broken spirits. God's calls us to take the resources he has given us and use them for the good of all, and to be considerate of the plight of the weak and powerless. On Christ the King Sunday we must decide to show that Jesus Christ is our King and we must do so by having the courage and commitment to become more and more a part of the reign of God.

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'virtue is not far from us, nor is it without ourselves, but it is within us,
and is easy if only we are willing' (*Anthony the Great*).

Charles Royden

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

"If Christ Is King, What Does That Mean?" Greg Garrett, *Day 1*,
http://day1.org/3357-if_christ_is_king_what_does_that_mean

"Heaven's Audit of One's Soul," the Rev. Dr. Wiley Stephens, *Day 1*
http://day1.org/1120-heavens_audit_of_ones_soul

Sermons from Seattle has a series on Christ the King

Going Incognito

Matthew 25:31-46

Save Us From Our Crosses

Luke 23:32-38

Our Final Day in Court

Matthew 25:31-46

The King of the Land and the Sea

John 18:33-37

I Don't Want To Be A Goat

Matthew 25:31-46

http://www.sermonsfromseattle.com/christ_the_king.htm

CHILDREN

Worshipping with Children -

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2011/10/year-proper-29-christ-king-reign-of.html>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Thou didst leave (*Tune Margaret*)

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Majesty

I come with joy to meet my Lord (*Kilmarnock*)

The church of Christ in very age (*Heronsgate*)

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty the King of Creation (lobe den herren)

Give me oil in my lamp (sing hosanna)

All of my hope on God is founded (michael)

Just as I am without plea (saffron walden)

Rejoice the Lord is King! (Gopsal)

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