



Diocese of Ely
THREE RIVERS GROUP
Chippenham, Fordham, Isleham, Kennett, Snailwell

Sunday 22nd November 2020 – Christ the King

Hymn: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7OCs0d_4vM

Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne.
while heaven's eternal anthem drowns all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died to be,
your Saviour and your matchless King through all eternity.

Crown him the Lord of life, triumphant from the grave,
who rose victorious from the strife for those he came to save;
his glories now we sing who died and reigns on high,
he died eternal life to bring, and lives that death may die.

Crown him the Lord of peace; his kingdom is at hand,
from pole to pole let warfare cease, and Christ rule every land;
a city stands on high his glory it displays,
and there the nations, 'Holy,' cry in joyful hymns of praise.

Crown him the Lord of years, the Potentate of time,
creator of the rolling spheres, in majesty sublime.
All hail, Redeemer, hail! for you have died for me;
thy praise shall never, never fail throughout eternity.

Confession

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.

Turn to us again, O God our Saviour, and let your anger cease from us:
Lord, have mercy.

Show us your mercy, O Lord, and grant us your salvation:
Christ, have mercy.

Your salvation is near for those that fear you,
that glory may dwell in our land:
Lord, have mercy.

May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ
our Lord.
Amen

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. **Amen**

Readings

A reading from the prophet 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.

Psalm 95.1-7

1 O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

3 For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

4 In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also.

5 The sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land, which his hands have formed.

6 O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

7 For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

A reading from Paul's letter to the Ephesians (1.15-end)

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

A reading from St. Matthew's Gospel (25.31-end)

'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.’

Sermon (*with thanks to David Cleugh*)

<https://youtu.be/20bPggq8HG4>

Today is the feast of Christ the King. A relative newcomer to the calendar, it has only featured in the Church of England calendar for about 20 years, though has been about for nearly 100 years in the calendars of other churches, very young in the 2000 year history of our faith. It originally came about as a response to the rise of fascism in Europe between the world wars. A response to seeing destructive leadership in the world and an opportunity for the church to present something distinct.

What seems less clear to me is what that Christian leadership should look like. At one level my instinct is that a one size fits all approach just won't wash. In our scriptures and in the tradition of the church a wide variety of leadership styles have been embraced. So, with that caveat let's look at our reading from Ezekiel and see what sort of leader emerges from this text.

It embraces a popular biblical image of the leader as a shepherd, following on from the great tradition of David the shepherd boy going from being a forgotten younger brother, tending the sheep, to a great and mighty warrior who brought down Goliath and led the people of Israel to victory, who went on to become a king, interestingly a king who often got it wrong. It plays into an identity issue, although not everyone kept sheep in the time of Ezekiel they all knew that the keeping of animals was very much in their history and as a consequence it would have been a familiar image to those listening to the prophet.

Most of us are more remote from the care of sheep, or any other livestock for that matter. Some of us may hold on to some traces of an agricultural past and have some basic understanding. Fortunately, however, I'm not sure that deep knowledge of how to care for sheep is necessary to understand this passage.

If we take the shepherd to be the leader and the sheep to be the people committed to their leadership it is clear that the leader is responsible for making sure the people have all they need to flourish. For sheep this is access to good feeding ground, rich pastures but also feeding on the mountains, making use of all the land around available. Also ensuring a good water source. This is before we move on to searching out the sheep which have gone astray, the binding up of the injured, ensuring that the weak are strengthened and not weakened by the greed of the strong.

It is a picture of a leader who uses the resources at their hands to ensure the flourishing of the people. To have special care for those who are most weak and vulnerable.

So, what might this look like in the life of the church today? To be a shepherd-like leader? We hope to offer some sort of nourishment to the members of our flock through preaching and the various study groups we encourage. We provide and encourage spaces to be nourished by the clear waters of prayer in prayer groups, morning

offices and compliance. We try to search out the lost, to notice when people seem to disappear from amongst us. Of course, we don't scratch every itch, and I'm sure there are areas we could do better. Fortunately, we have sheep who are able to speak so please to do say if there are ways we could be caring, feeding and tending you better? What is missing from our teaching and praying opportunities? Please do let us know.

Though perhaps we should also think about what this model of leadership might mean for the world. What might it be like if our political leaders acted in this way? Ensured that those who elected them (and importantly those who did not vote for them) are encouraged to be able to flourish? How do we ensure that people have access to education, healthcare, career opportunities, housing and all those other things which contribute to human flourishing? How do we stop those strong sheep from taking away the little that the weak sheep have?

Of course, in many ways this is all too simplistic, no one leadership style can confront all of the complex web of decisions leaders need to make. My hope and prayer is whatever leadership style is being embraced that it incorporates the tender care of the shepherd, the one who cares for the weak and ensures thereby that all can flourish together.

Hymn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FTwgkv8BCU>

The head that once was crowned with thorns is crowned with glory now;

a royal diadem adorns the mighty Victor's brow.

The highest place that heaven affords is his, is his by right,
the King of kings and Lord of lords, and heaven's eternal Light:

The joy of all who dwell above, the joy of all below,
to whom he manifests his love, and grants his name to know.

To them the cross, with all its shame, with all its grace, is given;
their name an everlasting name, their joy the joy of heaven.

They suffer with the Lord below, they reign with him above;
their profit and their joy to know the mystery of his love.

The cross he bore is life and health, though shame and death to him;
his people's hope, his people's wealth, their everlasting theme.

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.

Intercessions

United in the company of all the faithful and looking for the coming of the kingdom, let us offer our prayers to God, the source of all life and holiness.

Merciful Lord, strengthen all Christian people by your Holy Spirit, that we may live as a royal priesthood and a holy nation to the praise of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

Bless *Stephen* our bishop and Dagmar Bishop of Huntingdon and all ministers of your Church, that by faithful proclamation of your word, we may be built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets into a holy temple in the Lord.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

Empower us by the gift of your holy and life-giving Spirit, that we may be transformed into the likeness of Christ from glory to glory.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

Give to the world and its peoples the peace that comes from above,

that they may find Christ's way of freedom and life.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

Hold in your embrace all who witness to your love in the service of the poor and needy; all who minister to the sick and dying; and all who bring light to those in darkness.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

Touch and heal all those whose lives are scarred by sin or disfigured by pain,
that, raised from death to life in Christ, their sorrow may be turned to
eternal joy.
Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

Remember in your mercy all those gone before us who have been well-pleasing to you from eternity; preserve in your faith your servants on earth, guide us to your kingdom and grant us your peace at all times.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

Hasten the day when many will come from east and west, from north and south, and sit at table in your kingdom.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

We give you thanks for the whole company of your saints in glory, with whom in fellowship we join our prayers and praises; by your grace may we, like them, be made perfect in your love.

Blessing and glory and wisdom,
thanksgiving and honour and power,
be to our God for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reflection

At the point in our service where we would usually be remembering the Last Supper together, we pause to pray for those with whom we would usually be receiving bread and wine in church. Quietly think of each of those in church, those you know well and know what to pray for them and those you know less well and are unsure of how to pray. Perhaps at this point you would like to eat some bread and drink

something. We are reminded that although separated at this time we are still members together of the body of Christ.

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 Hymn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TyMBxqovByc>

Christ is the King! O friends, rejoice;
Brothers and sisters, with one voice
Make all men know He is your choice.
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

Oh magnify the Lord, and raise
Anthems of joy and holy praise
For Christ's brave saints of ancient days.
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

They with a faith forever new
Followed the King, and round Him drew
Thousands of faithful men and true.
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

O Christian women, Christian men,
All the world over, seek again

The way disciples followed then.
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

Christ through all ages is the same:
Place the same hope in His great name,
With the same faith His word proclaim.
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

Let love's unconquerable might
Your scattered companies unite
In Service to the Lord of light.
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

So shall God's will on earth be done,
New lamps be lit, new tasks begun,
And the whole church at last be one.
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. **Amen.**

Closing Music:

For Organ Lovers: (played by David Poulter) Crown Imperial – Walton
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYEUFkHEOKE>

For Choral Lovers: Let All Mortal Flesh – Bairstow
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtGKEV4pQNw>

For something more modern: King of Kings Majesty
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QXgWQbFNBM>

Notices

Beatitudes Course

The Pilgrim Course on the Beatitudes will be held on Zoom at the following times:

- Tuesdays, 7.30-9pm (starting 3rd November)
- Fridays, 10.30am-12 noon (starting 6th November)

There is still space and time to join if you're interested. Please contact Rev'd Anna for details if so.

Sunday Evening Service – 8pm

A quiet service to round off Sunday (open to everyone but may be particularly valuable if you're not able to come to church in the morning). The Zoom session will open from 7.30 to allow people to chat beforehand, and worship will start at 8pm. We will explore different forms of Night Prayer through the month (1st Sunday: traditional Compline; 2nd: Celtic Night Prayer; 3rd: Compline in contemporary language; 4th: Contemplative Night Prayer), beginning on 25th October with a contemplative service. Please consider who you might invite to join us for this new venture. Meeting ID: 810 1509 1842.

Bible Book Club

Next instalment will be on Wednesday 2nd December 7.30-9pm. We will be looking at the letter to the Hebrews. Good if you can have read the book in advance.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82818509505> Meeting ID: 828 1850 9505

Intercessions: Funerals (Attendance by invitation only)

Priscilla Gaskin (Chippenham)

Funeral Newmarket Cemetery, Monday 16th November 11.30am

Loddy Buck

Fordham Churchyard, Wednesday 18th November 2.30pm

Stanley Gilbey (Fordham)

West Suffolk Crematorium Tuesday 1st December 11.30am

Three Rivers Ministry Team

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Social Media Facebook: @thethreeriversgroup

Youtube:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_xNAa4zgNZrE8lmizNC_3g