

THE CAMEL-ALLEN CHURCHES

WORSHIP AT HOME

SUNDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2020

CHRIST THE KING



Welcome to today's Worship at Home on this, the last Sunday in the Church calendar, when we celebrate Christ the King.

We come from scattered lives to meet with God. Let us recognize his presence with us.

Hymn

At the Name of Jesus, every knee shall bow,
Every tongue confess Him King of glory now;
'Tis the Father's pleasure we should call Him Lord,
Who from the beginning was the mighty Word.

Mighty and mysterious in the highest height,
God from everlasting, very light of light:
In the Father's bosom with the spirit blest,
Love, in love eternal, rest, in perfect rest.

At His voice creation sprang at once to sight,
All the angel faces, all the hosts of light,
Thrones and dominations, stars upon their way,
All the heavenly orders, in their great array.

Humbled for a season, to receive a name
From the lips of sinners unto whom He came,
Faithfully He bore it, spotless to the last,
Brought it back victorious when from death He passed.

Bore it up triumphant with its human light,
Through all ranks of creatures, to the central height,
To the throne of Godhead, to the Father's breast;
Filled it with the glory of that perfect rest.

Name Him, brothers, name Him, with love strong as death
But with awe and wonder, and with bated breath!
He is God the Saviour, He is Christ the Lord,

Ever to be worshipped, trusted and adored.

In your hearts enthrone Him; there let Him subdue
All that is not holy, all that is not true;
Crown Him as your Captain in temptation's hour;
Let His will enfold you in its light and power.

Brothers, this Lord Jesus shall return again,
With His Father's glory, with His angel train;
For all wreaths of empire meet upon His brow,
And our hearts confess Him King of glory now.



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.

**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.**

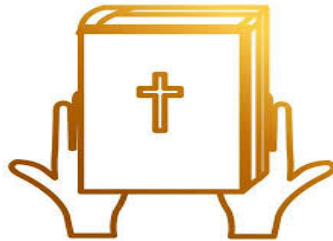
Absolution

Almighty God,
Who in Jesus Christ has given us
A kingdom that cannot be destroyed,
Forgive you your sins,
Open your eyes to God's truth,
Strengthen you to do God's will
And give you the joy of his kingdom,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Collect

We each pray silently for a moment and then draw our prayers together in the words of the 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

Ezekiel 34: 11 -16 & 20 -24

¹¹ For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. ¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats: ¹⁸ Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture? When you drink of clear water, must you foul the rest with your feet? ¹⁹ And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have fouled with your feet?

²⁰ Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹ Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, ²² I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

²³ I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴ And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.

Ephesians 1: 15 - End

⁵ I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love^[e] toward all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷ 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, ¹⁸ 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, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰ 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, ²¹ 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. ²² And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Hymn

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
pilgrim though this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand;
Bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain,
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fiery cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through;
strong Deliverer,
be thou still my Strength and Shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside;
bear me through the swelling current,
land me safe on Canaan's side;
songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee.

The Gospel

Alleluia, alleluia,
You, Christ, are the King of glory,
The eternal Son of the Father.
Alleluia.

Matthew, 25: 31 - end

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. ³² 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, ³³ and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴ 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; 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, ³⁶ 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.’ ³⁷ 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? ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ ⁴⁰ 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,^[a] you did it to me.’ ⁴¹ 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; ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ 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.’ ⁴⁴ 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?’ ⁴⁵ 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.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”



Talk

Today is the festival of Christ the King, which comes at the very end of the Church’s year which we conclude with the glorious proclamation that Christ is King, the Lord ~ and judge ~ of all. Our Gospel reading depicts Christ as King and judge at the last judgment: but is it intended to be a literal description of the last days or is it in the nature of a parable?

There is a tension between this passage and the fundamental message we receive from so much of our New Testament. St Paul’s message, in essence, is that all we need for salvation is faith and trust in Jesus. Here we seem to be being told that

Christ will separate the sheep from the goats and that only the sheep will be saved: and the test for what will separate the sheep from the goats will be how we have behaved in this life towards the poor, distressed and needy. Does placing faith and trust in Christ then count for nothing? If that were so, much of our New Testament would be at best misleading and, at worst, plain wrong. That strongly suggests that we need to take something other than a literal approach to this difficult passage in Matthew's Gospel.

The picture which is painted here is too black and white to be realistic: none of us are all sheep or all goat: we are all in some degree part sheep and part goat. Jesus not infrequently spoke in extreme terms to make a memorable point and we need to view this passage through the lens of everything else Jesus said and stood for.

The overall Gospel message is that Christ died for us in order that we might be forgiven our sins ~ and that we have, indeed, been forgiven. In other words, the "goat" part of us is disregarded if we only put our faith and trust in Christ to achieve that for us. Thus, when this word picture of the last judgment speaks of separating the sheep from the goats, what it means is that the "sheep" parts of us will be separated out for eternal life, but that the "goat" bits will be cast out and extinguished as unfit for eternal life with God.

Of particular note is the way Jesus responds to both the "sheep" and the "goats" when they ask when it was that they either did or did not demonstrate charity to Jesus. Jesus is the

King who so identifies with the marginalized in his Kingdom that to offer or withhold charity to the least of them is to offer or withhold it to Christ himself.

Recently, on 11 November, the Church remembered Martin, Bishop of Tours, who died in c 397. Martin, a well-to-do Roman cavalry officer, had a vision of Christ in the face of a naked beggar and gave him half his cloak. So moved was Martin by the vision that he was baptized and then imprisoned for refusing to fight in the Roman army as a self declared "soldier of Christ". Seeing Christ in the face of a naked beggar is a vivid illustration of what Jesus meant when he said to the sheep that, when you fed the hungry, you fed me and, to the goats, that when they refused food to the hungry, it was as if it were Christ himself they were leaving to starve.

As some of you may know, I still have strong links to Manchester and, when I am there, I attend St Ann's Church.

St Ann's Square with tributes after the 2017 Manchester Arena bombing, viewed from St Ann's Church





Immediately outside the church, facing into St Ann's Square, is a sculpture of a homeless person stretched out on a bench, covered by a blanket. Only the bare feet protrude from the blanket and, on closer inspection, one sees that the feet are pierced. This is "the Homeless Christ".

Part of our Gospel passage forms the only words used to accompany the statue, "*I was hungry and you gave me food*".

A report by the Trussell Trust in September 2020, "*Lockdown, Lifelines And The Long Haul Ahead*", reveals how the coronavirus has affected food bank use, with a huge rise in people needing to use a food bank. During the start of the pandemic around half of people who used a food bank had never needed one before.

Families with children are being hit the hardest during the crisis. The Manchester United footballer, Marcus Rashford, has done his bit to pressurise the government into taking steps to alleviate the situation for hungry children during the pandemic: but analysis carried out by Heriot-Watt University with support from the National Institute of Economic

and Social Research estimates that there is likely to be a 61% rise in need at food banks this winter: and that estimate was given before the second lockdown came into effect.

Mass unemployment predicted on a scale not seen since the early nineties is likely to see further rises in poverty: this is on top of year-on-year rises in the number of people forced to use food banks across the UK even before the pandemic crisis and the resulting lockdowns took their toll.



These statistics are startling and, even if a gross overestimate, nevertheless reveal a deeply disturbing story

about the state of our nation in these extremely difficult times.

We have all, perhaps, become a little too complacent about third world poverty and the malnourished children we sometimes see on our TV screens: but this is not just another drama playing itself out in a remote corner of the world from which it is all too easy to shield our eyes. There are hungry and homeless people, adults and children, here, now, in this country in 2020.

How are we to respond to this situation ? As sheep or as goats ?

Affirmation of Faith

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.**

Prayers

Let us with confidence present our prayers and supplications to the throne of grace.

We pray for all those in positions of power,
That they may govern with wisdom and integrity,
Serving the needs of the people.
May your reign come.
Lord, hear our prayer.



We pray for the church, the sign of your reign,
That it may extend your welcome to people of every race and
background.
May your kingdom come.
Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for Christians of every denomination,
That together we may come to understand
The royal priesthood you bestowed on us in baptism.
May your dominion come.
Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for those whose commitment to truth
Brings them into conflict with earthly powers,
That they may have the courage to endure.
May your rule come.
Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for this community of faith,
That attentive to your word
We may always worship in spirit and in truth.
May your reign come.

Lord, hear our prayer

We pray especially at this time for America,
Praying especially that the Presidential election
May be brought to a peaceful conclusion;
That the democratic process may be transparent;
And that the final result
May be seen by all to be a fair and truthful reflection
Of the will of the people.

Lord, hear our prayer.

And we pray for this nation
In the second lockdown
And for all peoples affected by the continuing pandemic.
We pray that the virus may be brought under control
And that your people may soon be released from the
continuing infringements of their liberty,
With the minimum of suffering and loss of life.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Loving god,
You have taught us that the power of the heart
Is greater than the power of wealth and might.
Hear us as we pray for the fulfilment of your reign.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our King;

To him be glory and power for ever.

Amen.

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

All **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.**

The Peace

To crown all things there
must be love,
to bind all together and
complete the whole.
Let the peace of Christ
always rule in our hearts.



Hymn

King of glory, King of peace,
I will love Thee;
And that love may never cease,
I will love Thee.
Thou hast granted my request,
Thou hast heard me;
Thou didst note my working breast,
Thou hast spared me.

Wherefore with my utmost art
I will sing Thee,
And the cream of all my heart
I will bring Thee.
Though my sins against me cried,
Thou alone didst clear me;
And alone, when they replied,
Thou didst hear me.

Seven whole days, not one in seven,
I will praise Thee;
In my heart, though not in Heaven,
I can raise Thee.
Small it is, in this poor sort
To enroll Thee:
E'en eternity's too short
To extol Thee.

Dismissal & Blessing

God the Father,
Who has given to his Son the name above every name,
Strengthen you to proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord.

Amen.

God the Son,
Who is our great High Priest passed into the heavens,
Plead for you at the right hand of the Father.

Amen.

God the Holy Spirit,
Who pours out his abundant gifts upon the Church,
Make you faithful servants of Christ our King.

Amen.

And the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Be among you all,
This day and ever more.

Amen.



Go, in the peace of Christ the King.
Thanks be to God.

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