



(All the words of today's hymns are printed at the end of the worship)

Today is the last Sunday of the church year, the Sunday that has come to be known as Christ the King, a Sunday to celebrate the kingship of Christ. Our readings today all make some reference, though some more obvious than others, but references to Jesus as a King. For me it is our five hymns that show Jesus in the fullness of His kingship, a theme that appears to have inspired hymn writers through the ages given that this morning's hymns span a century and a half, from O worship the King written in 1833 through to The Servant King written by Graham Kendrick in 1983.

Between them they explore Jesus in just about every kingly role we have come to know him in. We will sing of his life from a humble birth, to being scorned and ill treated, a victim crucified, at a time when he was labelled 'Jesus King of the Jews'. A king crowned with gold and also of a crown of thorns. A Christ triumphant, a Priestly King enthroned in heaven, King of glory, Son of (King) David, a King of kings; a king 'glorious above', a servant King. A crowned king, a matchless king, a king of life, of peace and of the years; hymns that give a complete overload of images of Jesus as king in so many ways.

This Sunday used to be known as 'stir up Sunday', the collect for the day began with the words 'Stir up', it was often taken as a reminder that the time was just right to stir up the ingredients of the Christmas pudding to make sure it was matured for the Christmas dinner. The full words of the collect read: Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the will of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of thee be of plenteous reward.

We end the year with a celebration of Christ as our King but at the same time we pray that God will stir up our wills, so that we might get on with doing the good works that he has planned for us to do, as we look toward the new year and once again prepare for the coming of the infant King.

Collect for the day

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

A reading from Ezekiel

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.

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.

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Ephesians.

¹⁵ I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love 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.



A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew

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, 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.”

Words from Fr Rodney

In the Old Testament God reveals and describes Himself to His people in many different ways, and one of the most significant is that of being the ‘Shepherd’ of His people. We see this today in the reading from the prophet Ezekiel. The image of a ‘shepherd’ was one that the people of Jesus’ day knew very well, but perhaps one of the most significant differences from

shepherds of today was that they led their sheep from the front and the sheep followed them because they had learned to trust their shepherd. This couldn't be more different from our own day when sheep are driven with sheep dogs, often by the shepherd on a quad bike ! In the Gospels Jesus picks up this image and calls Himself the 'Good Shepherd'. He calls us to follow Him with the same trust as the sheep followed their shepherds in His day. Following Jesus means that we shape every aspect of the way we live by what He has taught and shown us. We see this very clearly reflected in the Gospel reading for today in which Jesus clearly illustrates how our daily lives should reflect our faith, for in serving others we serve our 'Servant King'. As this Christian year comes to an end, and we look to the new Church's year beginning with Advent Sunday next week, let us ask God to make us good 'sheep' that we may follow Him in faith and trust so that, as our Good Shepherd, He can bless, lead and guide us in the year ahead.

Intercessions - Let us pray

Loving God we come before you now to pray for our world in which there is so much trouble. Help us to mend your broken world that all may live in peace. We pray for world leaders as they seek to do the best they possibly can in leading us through the pandemic. Give them guidance and wisdom in all their decision-making as they seek to bring the virus under control. Amen

We pray for the church across the world as it seeks to serve its communities amidst the pandemic. Give strength and peace to our church leaders as they seek to guide us through this difficult time and we pray that they find rest and renewal in you when they need it. We pray for our own church, for our annual meetings taking place this week, for all who take on the responsibilities for our church and its work and give thanks for the support of Fr Rodney as we work through these difficult times; we pray for the day in which we can all safely meet together for worship once more.

Father we pray for our families, our friends and neighbours. We continue to thank you for all those whose love and care helps to sustain us during these difficult times and we pray for the strength and resilience we need to face the days ahead. Amen

We pray for all those who are in need of our prayers at this time, those in hospital and care homes and those who care for them, those struggling with mental health problems and those who feel alone. We pray that they receive the support they need and come to know your peace, strength and love. We pray also for those on the frontline who are working to

overcome the virus and ask for your blessings on the efforts of all those working on treatments and vaccines. We also bring before you our own concerns for people we know who are in need of our prayers at this time. Amen

We commend to you those who have died, particularly any we wish to hold in our prayers today.... We place them into your care knowing that you welcome them with open arms. Comfort those who mourn their loss and we pray that they know your presence with them at this difficult time. Amen

In a moment of silence bring your own prayers

The Lords prayer

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, forever and ever. Amen.



O worship the king – Written 1833

O worship the King, all glorious above:
O gratefully sing his pow'r and his love:
Our shield and defender, the ancient of days,
pavillioned in splendour, and girded with praise.

O tell of his might, O sing of his grace,
whose robe is the light, whose canopy space;
his chariots of wrath the deep thunder clouds form,
and dark is his path on the wings of the storm

O measureless might, ineffable love,
While angels delight in hymn thee above,
They humbler creation, though feeble their lays,
With true adoration shall sing to thy praise.

Crown Him with many crowns - Written 1851

Crown him with many crowns the lamb upon his throne;
Hark, how the heav'nly anthem drowns all music but its own;
Awake, my soul, and sing, of him who died for thee,
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 hymn 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 thou hast died for me;
Thy praise shall never, never fail throughout eternity.

Christ triumphant – Written 1964

Christ triumphant, ever reigning, Saviour, Master, King!
Lord of heaven, our lives sustaining, hear us as we sing:
Yours the glory and the crown, the high renown, the eternal name.

Word incarnate, truth revealing, Son of Man on earth!
power and majesty concealing by your humble birth:
Yours the glory and the crown, the high renown, the eternal name.

Suffering servant, scorned, ill - treated, victim crucified!
death is through the cross defeated, sinners justified:
Yours the glory and the crown, the high renown, the eternal name.

Priestly king, enthroned for ever high in heaven above!
sin and death and hell shall never stifle hymns of love:
Yours the glory and the crown, the high renown, the eternal name.

So, our hearts and voices raising through the ages long,
ceaselessly upon you gazing, this shall be our song:
Yours the glory and the crown, the high renown, the eternal name.

You are the King of Glory – Written 1978

You are the King of Glory, You are the Prince of Peace
You are the Lord of heaven and earth, You're the Son of righteousness
Angels bow down before You, Worship and adore for
You have the words of eternal life, You are Jesus Christ the Lord
Hosanna to the Son of David, Hosanna to the King of Kings
Glory in the highest heaven for Jesus the Messiah reigns

The servant King – Written 1983

From heaven you came helpless babe, entered our world your glory veiled
Not to be served but to serve and give Your life that we might live

(C) This is our God, The Servant King, He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering, Of worship to The Servant King

There in the garden of tears, My heavy load he chose to bear
His heart with sorrow was torn, 'Yet not My will but Yours, ' He said

Come see His hands and His feet, The scars that speak of sacrifice
Hands that flung stars into space, To cruel nails surrendered

So let us learn how to serve, and in our lives enthrone him;
Each others needs to prefer, for it is Christ we're serving