

Sunday Worship Sheet Christ the King

Our worship for this week was written by Howard Jackson,
a Local Preacher and Member at St. John's Bangor.

You may wish to have your Bible to hand. Please note the hymns are now at the back of the sheet for ease of printing. CCLI licence 556292

Introduction: Today is the last Sunday in the church's year, known as "Christ the King". Next Sunday will be Advent Sunday and the lectionary will be starting Year B, with Gospel readings taken from Mark. Later in the service we shall reflect on what kind of King is meant.

Opening Prayer: Let us sing to the Lord. Let us make a joyful noise. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving and songs of praise. The Lord is our God, our shepherd let us listen to God's voice.
From Roots on the Web

Hymn 1: StF 327 Jesus is King and I will extol him

Prayer of Approach: Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence that our sovereign Lord rules with justice and mercy. Let us come, just as we are, with no pretence of any kind. Let us worship him in spirit and in truth. Amen.

Prayer of Adoration: Lord of all, may the world's nations acknowledge your name and join with us in worship and praise. Lord of mercy may every person in this world recognise their need and look to you for forgiveness and grace. Lord of grace may the whole world understand the depths of your love and turn to you for salvation and peace. Amen.
Based on a prayer in The Act of Prayer

The Lord's Prayer:

Prayer of Confession: Lord, you know us better than we know ourselves. We know that you love us despite all our failings. Bring into our minds the things you would have us change and put right ... Forgive us for all these Lord, in your mercy.
Above all, since we rely on your forgiveness, help us to be equally forgiving towards other people. In your name and in your power, we pray. Amen.

OT Reading: 1 Samuel 8:1-20

Psalms: 100

NT Reading: Ephesians 1:15-23

Hymn 2: StF 326 Jesus comes with all his grace.

Reflection: What does the word "king" mean to you. We are just getting used to the idea of a King, having had a Queen for 70 years. Soon, we shall have both postage stamps and coins

showing king Charles' head in profile. In Britain, the King has a part in government, but his powers are limited by Parliament. The most important part is to sign off new legislation agreed in Parliament. Also, at the opening of a new Parliamentary session, it is the King's job to present the government's plans for the session. Then of course there is the weekly meeting with the Prime Minister which enables the King to give good advice to the head of his government.

The title "Christ the King" comes from the distant past when Kings had a good deal more power. Absolute power over people's lives in many cases. Power to make laws, to go to war and to make appointments for the top jobs in the land. Today in Britain all this power is vested in the democratically elected government. In Jesus' day, though, it was not a King, but the Roman Emperor who had all the power. He appointed governors over all his provinces. In Israel, we find there were also local Kings appointed by the Roman governor. At the time of Jesus, these belonged to a dynasty of Jews from the ruling Herod family. It's no surprise that a King called Herod was King over Judah at the time of Jesus' crucifixion.

So, when the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, asked Jesus if he was King of the Jews, it was a bit of a loaded question. If the answer was "yes", then that was a direct challenge to the authority of the governor. But Jesus' answer was not a direct yes or no, rather the question was thrown back to the governor. "Are those your words?" (or did somebody tell you that) Not a flat denial, but a suggestion that it was someone's baseless accusation.

The Old Testament reading from 1 Samuel sheds some interesting light on how the idea of a King was regarded by the prophet Samuel. The tribal leaders persuaded Samuel to consult God about having a King like other nations. Samuel was not pleased because they were rejecting his leadership of God's people. However, God told Samuel that they had not rejected Samuel only, but they were also rejecting God's sovereignty. The tribal leaders wanted to be like the other nations, but God pointed out the downside of being subject to a king. Because the King had absolute power, he would be able to take, as a right, anything he wanted from the people. Their goods, their time, their riches would be under threat. But the tribal leaders were not persuaded by this threat. They wanted a King to lead them into battle, rather than a prophet whose success in battle was now questionable. (You can read in 1 Samuel 4-7 how the Israelites led by Samuel, lost 4000 men and the Ark of the Covenant in a battle near Ebenezer.)

Jesus refused to claim he was a King in front of Pontius Pilate. But Saint Paul made an even more audacious claim on his behalf. In our reading from his letter to the Ephesian Christians, Paul wrote *"he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church"*. For Paul, Jesus the Messiah had power and authority not just over Kings, but over Emperors. Not just King of Kings but Emperor of Emperors. Not just leader of a dozen or so disciples but archbishop of archbishops.

And how does that compare with Jesus' teaching about God's kingdom? It seems to be exactly the opposite of the upside-down kingdom Jesus taught about. Where the last shall be first and the first last. Where those desiring leadership should be servants of all. And when you think about it, Jesus practised what he taught. He took the role of servant and took the way of obedience which led to his crucifixion that resulted in our salvation. That is why God gave him such power and authority in his kingdom, so that we should recognise him as our King – the Servant King. As his subjects we reflect his servant heart, living our lives for others. Perhaps we should think of today as "Christ the Servant King Sunday". And in his words "Go and do likewise".

Pause for thought:

Prayer of thanksgiving: Thank you, Lord God, for being in control of everything. You judge what is right and wrong; but we need not despair. You are mighty; with you all things are possible. You gently bring us back when we stray. You put your loving arms around us when we hurt. You strengthen us when we are weak. Thank you for your love in our lives, that helps us know you better; for the security that knowing you gives us. Thank you for your abundant blessings; you give more than we need so that we can faithfully pass them on. Thank you, Lord God, for meeting all our needs, for strengthening us, for loving us. May we lovingly pass on to others all we learn and receive, for your provision never ceases. We give our thanks and praise. Amen.

From Roots on the Web

Prayers of Intercession: Heavenly Father, we pray for the world, the church and those in need. Prince of Peace, we see and hear the sounds of war and suffering in a land which is no longer holy but desecrated as a killing field; breathe peace and reconciliation in the hearts of those who are left when fighting ceases so that the land becomes holy once again. Spirit of Worship, we are part of a church which defies your will and remains divided; put in your body the church a desire for unity that cannot be denied or held back. Healing Lord, we pray for those in need of healing, of friendship, of the means to live well; we name them one by one now in silent prayer ... We thank you for hearing our prayers and answering. Amen.

Collect for Christ the King: Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by you be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *From Collects for Common Worship*

Hymn 3: StF 272 From heaven you came helpless babe,

Blessing: May the giver of life sustain us as we offer him our service. May the giver of life go with us as we celebrate all he has given. May the source of life guide us as we walk in his way. And may the resurrection and the life, Jesus Christ our Lord, bless and keep us, now and for all eternity. Amen. *From More Short Prayers for Public Worship*

Hymn 327

- 1 Jesus is King
and I will extol him,
give him the glory,
and honour his name ;
he reigns on high,
enthroned in the heavens —
Word of the Father,
exalted for us.
- 2 We have a hope
that is steadfast and certain,
gone through the curtain
and touching the throne ;
we have a priest
who is there interceding,
pouring his grace
on our lives day by day.
- 3 We come to him,
our Priest and Apostle,
clothed in his glory
and bearing his name,
laying our lives
with gladness before him —
filled with his Spirit
we worship the King :
- 4 'O Holy One,
our hearts do adore you ;
thrilled with your goodness
we give you our praise !'
Angels in light
with worship surround him,
Jesus, our Saviour,
for ever the same.

Wendy Churchill

- 4 We are now his lawful right,
walk as children of the light ;
we shall soon obtain the grace,
pure in heart, to see his face.
Alleluia !
- 5 We shall gain our calling's prize ;
after God we all shall rise,
filled with joy, and love, and peace,
perfected in holiness.
Alleluia !

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Hymn 272

- 1 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.
*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.*
- 2 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.
- 3 Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.
- 4 So let us learn how to serve
and in our lives enthrone him,
each other's needs to prefer,
for it is Christ we're serving.

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

Hymn 326

- 1 Jesus comes with all his grace,
comes to save a fallen race :
object of our glorious hope,
Jesus comes to lift us up.
Alleluia !
- 2 Let the living stones cry out ;
let the seed of Abram shout ;
praise we all our lowly King,
give him thanks, rejoice, and sing.
Alleluia !
- 3 He has our salvation wrought,
he our captive souls has bought,
he has reconciled to God,
he has washed us in his blood.
Alleluia !