

Traditional Home service Sunday 22nd November Trinity 24

OPENING PRAYER

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.

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Come, let us return to the Lord and say:

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.

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.
Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (*see page 2*)

READINGS - Ezekiel 34.11-16,20-24
Ephesians 1.15-23
Matthew 25.31-46

TALK

CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Spend some time praying for our nation, our community and our families.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 2 (*see page 2*)

CONCLUSION

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

HYMNS TO USE

77 Matthew Bridges & Godfrey Thring.

CROWN HIM WITH MANY CROWNS,
The Lamb upon His throne;
Hark, how the heavenly anthem drowns
All music but its own!
Awake, my soul, and sing
Of Him who died for thee,
And hail Him as thy matchless King
Through all eternity.

Crown Him the Lord of life,
Who triumphed o'er the grave
And rose victorious in the strife
For those He came to save:
His glories now we sing,
Who died and rose on high,
Who died eternal life to bring
And lives that death may die.

Crown Him the Lord of love;
Behold His hands and side,
Those wounds yet visible above
In beauty glorified:
No angel in the sky
Can fully bear that sight,
But downward bends His burning eye
At mysteries so bright.

Crown Him the Lord of peace,
Whose power a sceptre sways
From pole to pole, that wars may cease,
And all be prayer and praise:
His reign shall know no end,
And round His pierced feet
Fair flowers of paradise extend
Their fragrance ever sweet.

Crown Him the Lord of years,
The Potentate of time,
Creator of the rolling spheres,
Ineffably sublime!
All hail, Redeemer, hail!
For Thou hast died for me;
Thy praise shall never, never fail
Throughout eternity.

1346 Stuart Townend & Keith Getty
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IN CHRIST ALONE my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied –
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine –
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

Sermon 22nd November
Revd Adrian Morton, Matthew 25:31-46

Those of you who are into your seasons and festivals, will know that this Sunday is Christ the King Sunday.

And so the readings are chosen to help us think about Christ as King and the implications for life because of that.

The Mathew reading is an apocalyptic reading about the end times.

Specifically about judgement day. When the nations will be gathered before the one who sits on the heavenly throne - the King.

And we get this scene of great numbers of people being separated into two groups.

The sheep at the King's right hand. Which is always the good place to be.

And the goats on the left.

And as the scene gets played out, it's the sheep who inherit the kingdom, because they were the ones who fed the hungry, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked and visited those in prison.

This reading, I believe, has been much misunderstood, and misused throughout the ages.

Today there are some charitable organisations, that are into social justice, who use this passage as their foundational statement.

'We've got to help the poor because that is what this passage tells us to do.'

'And more than that if you feed the hungry etc then its as if you are doing this to Christ.'

And we're encouraged, for example, that when we look at a homeless person we should see Christ in them.

And yes, of course, as Christians we should be concerned for the poor.

I think it's great that as a church we are looking to provide Christmas selection boxes for all the children of families associated with the Daylight centre.

As we look at a homeless person, we should see their humanity, a humanity that Jesus died for.

Social justice should be big on our agenda. There are plenty of other Bible passages that say that..

The parable of the Good Samaritan being one.

But that isn't what this passage is about.

This passage is about judgement day and it's about **allegiance**.

And more than that, what is the evidence as to where our allegiance lies?

Often we talk about belonging. And of course we belong to Christ and to each other.

But this passage tells us that our status as Christians is more even than belonging.

Our English word for allegiance comes from the Latin word 'alligo', meaning to bind. Who are we bound to?

Its a closer, deeper connection than simply belonging.

And of course, the sub question is 'are we bound to the King of glory.'
The King of heaven? Jesus?

In this passage the King says 'for I was hungry... I was a stranger... and so on...

And both the sheep and goats don't understand...

And then the King answers... and this is the key to understanding this passage (verse 40...).

"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

the least of these brothers of mine refers to Jesus' followers.

That's what it means.

So what this passage is doing is identifying Jesus with His followers.

When we become a Christian, when we are born again.
Our lives are intrinsically bound to Jesus' life.

Maybe to the extent that if we suffer Jesus suffers.
If we are persecuted Jesus is persecuted.

Didn't Jesus say to Saul on the road to Damascus, 'Why do you persecute me?'

He didn't say, 'Why do you persecute my followers, I don't like it'
He said, 'Why do you persecute me?'

Because Jesus' life is deeply bound to the life of His followers.

It's likely that this Christmas is going to look and feel very different from past Christmas's.

It may be that we aren't able to meet up with family as we've done in the past.

It's likely many of the parties that happen at Christmas won't happen.

I wonder whether much of the razz-ma-tazz of Christmas will be lost!

Maybe much of the indulgence that usually happens at Christmas won't happen?

I can't help thinking this may be an opportunity for people to dwell deeper on the Christmas story and what it really means.

And the significance for life it has.

Because Christmas deserves far more than razz-ma-tazz and indulgence.

It's hugely more serious than that!
It's about Jesus being born into the world to be King!

Shortly after telling this sheep & goats story, Jesus was arrested and later crucified.

When speaking to Pilate, Jesus affirms he is a king, and then says "for this reason I was born."

At his crucifixion a notice was fastened to the cross that read "Jesus of Nazareth, The King of the Jews."

Christmas tells the story of the king being born...

And His ministry of drawing people into His life.
Binding His life with those whose allegiance is with Him.

The King of glory.

Let's get back to this Matthew story...

You know, at the final judgement, I really don't know what it will be like.

For those in Christ it really will be ok... it'll be a glorious thing.

I sometimes wonder whether the only question He might ask of us is, 'Do you love me?'

There may be a sub question if that's not entirely clear... which is:
How did you show your love for me?

And because Christ's life is bound to that of His followers, the primary way we show love for Him is love for His followers.

In a pandemic it is completely understandable that we have to do church at home.

Worship by yourself, or with close family...

But in the end, the big picture is that we have to belong to a people of God.
We need a people to love, to serve, to support in mission...
Otherwise, we are just deceiving ourselves.

We can't be a Christian on our own..
And if we think we can we are living in deception...

In that Ephesians passage that we haven't had time to address, Paul says:

“I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus **and** your love towards all the saints, **and for this reason...**

He then goes onto pray for wisdom and revelation etc...

Their foundation was both faith in Jesus and love for the people of God...

When we love our brother and sister in Christ it is like we are loving Jesus because His life is bound to their life.

As it is to our life.

It's another reason why unity is so important. And division so destructive.

Maybe it is that if I persecute, malign, criticize, slander another Christian, I'm also doing that to Jesus...

Where does our allegiance lie?
And what is the evidence to show that?

We had the funeral for Margaret Upton this week.

Her allegiance was to Christ, and there was plenty of evidence for that.

King Jesus will have already said to her,
“Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

There really is no better person to have our allegiance.

The living Jesus, the one who brings meaning & purpose to life.

The One who wants the best for us.
And to live life to the full.

Amen.