

## **Call to Worship**

Psalm 95:1-7

### **Hymn** Singing the Faith (STF) number 83

Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven;  
To his feet thy tribute bring.  
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
Who like thee his praise should sing?  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise the everlasting King!

Father-like, he tends and spares us;  
Well our feeble frame he knows;  
In his hands he gently bears us,  
Rescues us from all our foes.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Widely as his mercy flows.

Praise him for his grace and favour  
To his people in distress;  
Praise him, still the same for ever,  
Slow to chide and swift to bless.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Glorious in his faithfulness.

Angels in the height, adore him;  
Ye behold him face to face;  
Sun and moon, bow down before him,  
Dwellers all in time and space.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise with us the God of grace!

## **A Prayer of Adoration and Praise**

Eternal Father, whose son Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven that he might rule over all things as Lord. Keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace. Bring the whole created order to worship at his feet, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and for ever. Amen.

## **A Prayer of Confession**

For all the times we have placed self-interest over the care of others, Lord have mercy.  
When we have misused authority and power, Christ have mercy  
For everything we do that depletes our environment and weakens biodiversity, Lord have mercy.  
Amen.

## **Bible Readings**

Ezekiel 34:11-16 & 20-24; Ephesians 1:15-23; Matthew 25:31-46.

## **Sermon**

This Sunday, the last in the Lectionary year, is always set aside to celebrate the Feast of Christ the King.

The song-writer Graham Kendrick is well known for the contribution he has made to Christian music over many years. Back in 2018, it was a great joy for a small group of us from Circuit to see Graham Kendrick "In Concert" at the Apex Theatre in Bury St. Edmunds. The final hymn that accompanies today's act of worship was written by Graham Kendrick. It is the much loved "From heaven you came helpless babe", better known as "The Servant King". A hymn that wonderfully marries the concept of humility and divinity.

Some of the work set before us on this last Sunday of the Lectionary Year, this Feast of Christ the King is to seek to have an ever-deepening understanding of the both the humility and divinity of Christ. The Psalm reading used as a Call to Worship, Psalm 95, is a great psalm of praise and

authority. In verse 3, the Psalmist reminds us “The Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods”.

Today as we study our bible readings, it is important to hold together the key concepts of divinity and humility. Jesus is lord of all. Jesus reigns in glory and will one day reign over all the earth and all of creation. Other hymn writers also help us to hold these key concepts together.

Consider and dwell upon the wonderful Easter hymn written by Thomas Kelly, (STF 312)

The head that once was crowned with thorns,  
Is crowned with glory now.  
A royal diadem adorns,  
The mighty victor's brow.

So, king Jesus reigns in glory and king Jesus is a servant king. John, Chapter 13 is also key in our understanding of the meekness and majesty of Christ, especially verses 3 -6.

“Jesus knew that the Father had given him complete power, he knew that he had come from God and was going to God. So, he rose from the table, took off his outer garment and tied a towel round his waist. Then he poured some water into a basin and began to wash the disciples feet and dry them with the towel round his waist”

This tender action of washing the disciples feet, is really an embodiment of the whole of Christ's ministry. After all, God incarnate in Jesus, is also the Shepherd King who ever seeks the lost and lays down his life for the flock. Jesus is the good Shepherd.

In complete contrast, today's reading from the prophet Ezekiel concerns Israel's false shepherds. Those who have neglected to care for the people. Those who have not exercised justice and mercy. Our Gospel reading from Matthew Chapter 25, concerns the judgement of the nations by Jesus and the judgement of us all.

This judgement seems to revolve around how we have exercised justice and mercy, how we have reached out to those in need. Matthew Ch. 25 has a very similar theology to the book of James. (Faith without works is dead). In terms of faith, it is one thing to talk the talk, but it is a constant challenge to us all to put our faith into real, tangible, practical action.

In today's Epistle reading, Paul prays for the Ephesians. He is most positive about the way in which they are living out their faith, he commends them for the love that they show. He prays that they might have wisdom. He reminds them of the great hope they have because of their faith. He offers a sublime prayer of adoration and talks of the immeasurable greatness of God. He ends his prayer by reminding the Ephesians that God and God alone, fills all in all.

The Ephesians have clearly learnt what it is to serve one another and their surrounding community in love and compassion. May we do likewise.

It is a great challenge to us all to seek to serve those around us in these days of Covid.

May we not lose hope or heart, may we ever look to Jesus as our ultimate role model who is among us, always as one who serves.

**Let us Pray.** Using the words of STF number 63.

Over all the earth, you reign on high,  
Every mountain stream, every sunset sky.  
But my one request, Lord, my only aim  
Is that you'd reign in me again.

Lord, reign in me, reign in your power over all my dreams, in my darkest hour.  
You are the Lord of all I am, so won't you reign in me again?

Over every thought, over every word,  
may my life reflect the beauty of my Lord;  
'cause you mean more to me than any earthly thing,  
so won't you reign in me again?

Lord, reign in me, reign in your power over all my dreams, in my darkest hour.  
You are the Lord of all I am, so won't you reign in me again?  
Amen

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Jesus, Servant King, teach us we pray, to be your servants in the world, to hear and respond to the cry of the needy oppressed and forgotten. Teach us to be practical in our response to human need. Teach us to be very tender with those who are especially weak and vulnerable. We pray for this in the decision making of those in authority and in our own decision making. Help us to always make time for kindness and care. May we ever look to you our, Shepherd King.

Almighty God, ruler of all, so, rule our hearts and lives that we might by your grace be found amongst those whose need is greatest.

We pray this day for all who are suffering in body, mind and spirit. We pray for all who exercise authority in Church and State. We pray this day that we might ever look to Christ as our ultimate model of compassion, care and service. Amen.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Hymn** STF number 272

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.*

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.

*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.*

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

*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.*

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

*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.*

### **The Grace & Blessing**

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be among you all, now and forever more.  
The Blessing of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you this day and ever more. **Amen.**