



'CHRIST THE KING'

CALL TO WORSHIP

Psalm 24: 7 – 10

A PRAYER OF PRAISE

God of power and might, God of majesty,
we praise your holy name. We lift up our voices,
to proclaim your greatness
You who rescue us from darkness,
and bring us into the Kingdom of your Son. **Amen.**

HYMN STF 327 Jesus is King

Watch on You tube : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQWP5LYtiZA>

*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*

*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*

*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*

*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, forever the same*

PRAYER OF APPROACH

King of Kings, we approach your throne in awe of your greatness and thankful for your love.
Lift up our eyes to you,
strengthen us by your power, and help us to give you first place in everything,
For you are the one before all and above all. Amen

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Lord, forgive us, when we have neglected to acknowledge or profess your importance in our lives.
Forgive us when we have prioritised the trivial, when we have enthroned other things in our hearts.
Restore our focus on you; help us to begin again.
Reclaim us and redeem us, God of everything, embedding in us a longing for your kingdom and a
sense of your majesty. **Amen**

READING Jeremiah 23: 1 – 8

HYMN STF 333 Majesty

Watch on Youtube : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OaRwD2Y7C0s>

*Majesty, worship His Majesty: Unto Jesus be all glory, honor, and praise.
Majesty, kingdom authority, Flow from His throne unto His own, His anthems raise.*

*So exalt, lift up on high the name of Jesus.
Magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus, the King.
Majesty, worship His Majesty, Jesus who died, now glorified, King of all Kings.*

READING John 18: 33 – 38

HYMN STF 272 The Servant King

Watch on Youtube : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4FtZ9XzZag>

*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*

*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 other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving*

SERMON: 'WHAT IS TRUTH?'

So, we have a new Monarch, King Charles III and we are having to get used to singing the National Anthem with changed lyrics. I remember soon after the announcement of the Queen's death, King Charles, met with Liz Truss the then, newly appointed Prime Minister, where he was overheard to say, 'I have been dreading this day'. I don't think he meant meeting Liz Truss! The problem was, he had not only just lost his Mum, but that he had a hard act to follow. To be honest, Queen Elizabeth 11's reign had been so long, so gracious, extending stability and security for the nation, over most of our lifetime, that it seemed impossible that it would ever end. Her death was a shock and an adjustment for all of us. We don't as yet know what gifts and attributes King Charles will bring to his reign, nor how he will compare to his mother as Sovereign. All we do know is that he will certainly not reign for 70 years!!

Good and bad Kings and Queens have reigned throughout our Nation's history, and throughout the history of the world. The Bible is full of the influence of good and bad reigning monarchs. But, as we are considering our theme of Christ the King today, what makes a king bad or good, what is the influence of power and what is truth?

Before we look at those issues in closer detail, I'll tell you a little story.

A king had 10 wild dogs. He used them to torture and kill any ministers that misguided him. A Minister once gave an opinion which was wrong and which the king didn't like at all...

So he ordered that the Minister to be thrown to the dogs. The Minister said, "I served you loyally for 10 years & you do this..?" The King was unrelenting. Minister pleaded, "Please give me 10 days before you throw me to the dogs". The King agreed. In those 10 days, the Minister went to the keeper of the dogs & told him he wanted to serve the dogs for the next 10 days...

The Guard was baffled... But he agreed. So the minister started feeding the dogs, caring for them, bathing them, providing all sorts of comfort for them. So when the 10 days were up...

The King ordered that the minister be thrown to the dogs as sentenced.

When he was thrown in, everyone was amazed at what they saw...

The dogs were wagging their tails playing with the condemned minister... licking his feet.

The King was baffled at what he saw, "What happened to the dogs?" He growled.

The Minister then said, "I served the dogs for only 10 days & they didn't forget my service... I served you for 10 years & you forgot everything at the first mistake"...

The King realised his mistake and said, 'Starting from this moment I want the dogs replaced with crocodiles!!!' A fictional king, of course, but a leader that we might recognise from our history books, or even in modern day times for their egotism, their thirst for supreme power and control, and their inability to see and acknowledge the truth of a situation.

So, let's see why kings are appointed in the first place by reflecting on a thumbnail sketch of the making of Biblical kings. Running throughout the entire Bible is the acknowledgment that God, as sovereign ruler of the universe, is the all-powerful and glorious king, who reigns forever and rules over all, from Psalm 10: 'The Lord is king for ever and ever', to Revelation 15, where God is described as King of the nations. But during the period of the Old Testament, Israel's national life functioned under various types of government, the absolute leadership of Moses, a federation of self-governing tribes, a united monarchy, a divided monarchy, and a governorship controlled by a foreign overlord. It was during the period when the various tribes looked after their own affairs, and things were going wrong, because the people of Israel no longer obeyed God, and were unfaithful to him, that they hit on the idea of appointing a king who would rule over the whole nation through a central government, in order to create and maintain stability. Like most good ideas without substance, and ignoring the underlying reason for the instability, it did not take long to unravel. After many and various good and bad kings down the centuries, it was widely understood that King David had been the best one, and so the Israelite people still hoped for the day when the dynasty of David would be restored to power. They looked for one who would be the ideal king, the great descendant of David whom they called the Lord's anointed one, or in the Hebrew language, the Messiah. In contrast to the kings of a former era, this king would rule with perfect wisdom, power, love and justice.

And so, we move speedily forward some 4000 years and find ourselves in Pilate's headquarters where we find Jesus being interrogated by the Roman governor. In this exquisite descriptive conversation written for us by St John we discover that this Jesus, is indeed the looked-for and longed-for King, but that those who had authority over his life or death, had been looking for the wrong sort of king in the wrong sort of places. He may have been, and is indeed, the ideal king, but he was not the king they wanted.

Strangely, though, Pilate seems to see in Jesus, qualities that others could not, or would not see. However, Pilate typifies that person or institution confronted with a critical decision who has instincts in one direction, but is pressurised to move in the other. Pilate reminds Jesus that he has the power to release him, or crucify him, and is almost pleading with him to save himself by giving the right answers to his questions. But increasingly the religious leaders rob him of his power and box him into a corner, so that he eventually yields. Pilate, like most power brokers lives in an illusion of power. There follows a conversation about kingship. 'Are you a king?' asks Pilate. 'My kingdom is not of this world,' replies Jesus. 'Then you are a king,' says Pilate obviously confused. Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice'. Then the discourse widens as Pilate asks that age old question, 'What is truth?'

We live in an age of untruth. Maybe we always have, but were not so aware of it before the onset of the internet and social media. But now we do not know who to believe. Things come to light about people in politics on almost a daily basis that undermine the truth we believed about them. The Kremlin says it has no intention of invading Ukraine whilst massing its troops on the borders, and then does. Trump is still protesting a stolen election and blaming fake news and yet continues to spread fake news himself. Mis-information abounds on social media to the extent that Q'anon, devised as a joke, is believed by the deluded, and divides and destroys families. Who then do you believe. What is truth?

Let's look again at the Kingdom of God, the kingdom that Jesus alluded to when before Pilate. The kingdom of God was central to Jesus' teachings, yet nowhere did Jesus say exactly what the kingdom was. It seems though, that Jesus understood God's kingdom as God's rule, rather than as a territory or a people. The person who seeks God's kingdom, says Matthew, is the one who seeks God's rule in their life. The one who receives God's kingdom, says Mark, is the one who receives God's rule in their life. The person who enters the Kingdom of God enters the realm where they accept God's rule.

The kingdom of God is past, present and future. Not only those of Jesus' time, but people of any era, when they believe in him, immediately enter his kingdom and receive the kingdom's blessings. That is us, you and me, followers of Jesus, Christ the King. That is us, you and me, who live in an age of uncertainty at every level, global warming, food and fuel insecurity, inflation, strikes threatened by industry and services, fake news, financial instability, global, national and personal. Where can we find trust and truth in that lot?

We won't. We will only find it in the nature and the kingship of the one who said, 'Everyone who belongs to the truth, listens to my voice' We need to believe that voice, and live as citizens of his kingdom.

Amen

HYMN STF 63 Over all the earth

Watch on Youtube : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uz1dL0GiLEq>

*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*

*Over all my dreams, in my darkest hour
'Cause You are the Lord of all I am
So won't You reign in me again
In me again*

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

O God, where voices proclaim other kings and other lords, re-establish your reign; where tyrants and dictators oppress the hungry, topple their thrones and rescue the oppressed.

O God, where so-called prophets and priests abuse their influence, expose their deeds of darkness with your awesome light; bring your justice to reign and may a new integrity be born in places of authority.

O God, where people sit in the darkness of poverty, anxiety, pain and disease, bring the light of your comfort, healing and strength, we pray. We pray that you will reign in the hearts of our families and friends, and where they find division and untruths, that they may find in you a secure and trustworthy place for their uncertainty and doubt. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

HYMN STF 319 Christ triumphant

Watch on Youtube : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0r3EogSdfPU>

*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...*

*Suffering servant, scorned, ill - treated,
victim crucified!*

BLESSING

Jesus, we go, knowing you are our true king, our Lord and Saviour. May we carry this knowledge in our hearts, equipped by your Spirit to live lives full of praise and service to you.
Amen.

*death is through the cross defeated,
sinners justified:
Yours the glory...*

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

*So, our hearts and voices raising
through the ages long,
ceaselessly upon you gazing,
this shall be our song:
Yours the glory...*