

**HOW Mission Community & KSAT Worship Service for
Sunday – 22nd November 2020
THEME: Christ the King**

Many thanks to Penny Hilland for the service this week.

Welcome

In the cycle of the Church year, this is the Sunday when we remember that our Jesus, our faithful shepherd, our teacher, our brother and friend, our beloved Saviour who laid down His life for us...that our own dear Jesus is alive and reigns as King over all things in heaven and on earth. Jesus Christ, and He alone, is Lord over everyone, even those who are unaware of this truth. He sits at the 'right hand of God the Father' which means that He is equal to God, that He has 'the very nature of God.' We move into Advent, acknowledging that Jesus came among us at Christmas, as one of us, and one with us, and that He will come again as King and judge of all the world. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. He is the King who comes to reconcile us eternally to God.

Your throne is God's throne for ever; the sceptre of your kingdom is the sceptre of righteousness. (Psalm 45, v. 6)

Prayers

Eternal Father, your Son, Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven so that he might rule with goodness and justice as King over all and bring the whole created order to his feet. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. We bow down before him in praise and thanksgiving and pray that in our hearts today, and in our relationships and actions, we may hear the call of Christ the King upon our lives. Draw us near, to be united with one another in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Help us to follow in his service, putting the welfare of others before self, and living in love and peace with one another for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Confession

Truly we say to you that we have seen the broken and not been moved to compassion. Truly we say to you that we have heard people mourning and have not given them our time. Truly we say to you that we have witnessed injustice and not raised our voices. Truly we say to you that we have seen the stranger and not said a word. Lord, you are present in all these people, all around us, and we are truly sorry for what we have done and regret what we have not done. We ask you to open our eyes and ears to you so that we may open our hearts to those around us.

from Psalm 29: The Lord shall give strength to his people; the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace. Amen.

Hymn MP 454 –Majesty<https://youtu.be/THSyafznNQY>

Majesty, worship His Majesty; unto Jesus be glory, honour and praise.

Majesty, kingdom, authority, flows from His throne, unto His own, His anthem 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: Ephesians 1: 15-23

Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called – his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honour at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else – not only in this world but also in the world to come. God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the Church. And the Church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

Reading: Matthew 25: 31-46

But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison and you visited me.....When you did it to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'

Then the King will turn to those on his left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones.....for I was hungry, and you didn't feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn't give me a drink. I was a stranger, and you didn't invite me into your home. I was naked, and you didn't give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't visit me. I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.'

Hymn: In Christ there is no east or west <https://youtu.be/TpITJOShix0>

In Christ there is no east or west, in Him no south or north
But one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide earth.

In Him shall true hearts everywhere their high communion find:
His service is the golden cord close-binding all mankind.

Join hands then, brothers of the faith, whate'er your race may be!
Who serves my Father as a Son is surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both east and west, in Him meet south and north,
All Christly souls are one in Him, throughout the whole wide earth.

Sermon

*Who is on the Lord's side? Who will serve the King?
Who will be his helpers, other lives to bring?
Who will leave the world's side? Who will face the foe?
Who is on the Lord's side? Who for Him will go?*

It is a warm, humid day as over a hundred Year 6 children and their teachers stand by the walls of remembrance in Kranji War Cemetery in Singapore. The sun swiftly rises overhead as we wait for the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh to arrive to lay a wreath on this, the 50th anniversary of VJ Day. We have provided a red and white umbrella for every child and they are all up, shielding the children from the sun. The Queen arrives at the bottom of the hill and we tell the children to close their umbrellas so that they will be able to see her. When Her Majesty reaches us, cool as a cucumber (how does she manage it?), we are introduced. We had rehearsed all sorts of conversation, but she swept us aside with something like this: Why aren't the children's umbrellas up? How long have they been standing there? Tell them to put them up before they start to faint. Somehow you just knew to do what she said, no ifs and buts! Here was authority! We also understood immediately that she was using it out of concern for the welfare of those children...to keep them safe.

When Paul speaks of Christ, he uses language that is unpopular in these days of independent free-thinking. He describes Christ as having immeasurable greatness, rule, authority, power and dominion. As people living in an anti-authoritarian culture we need to examine Paul's words. We do not like being told what to do, as illustrated by the daily opposition to whatever the government decides to do to help us through the coronavirus pandemic. We always know best! Add to that our knowledge of self-appointed despots, gripped by power, destroying great nations, and we might think the last thing we need is a supreme king. However, God in his love and wisdom, knows that we do. So it is for us to understand the King that he has given us and to interpret the 'kingly' language in the right way.

One of my favourite books is *The Lord of the Rings* by JRR Tolkien. Every time I dip into it, the story catches hold of my imagination and there seems to be no end to its depths of meaning. The author was deeply Christian and, although this is no parallel or alternative story to the scriptures, there is a king who arises, a man who was born to be king and who bears – without any show of personal power – his duty to protect and save the earth from destruction. Tempted, no doubt, but uncorrupted by power, he triumphs over evil forces and reigns over a renewed world of freedom and justice. It is a very human story of suffering, endurance and faith: of the struggles we face and the battles we fight in our longing for a better world. It shows us that we need the fellowship and the support of each other, in common cause, and it certainly helps the reader to understand about the true nature of kingship. The compelling connection with our Christ-King is that they both give us reason to *hope* that all will be well for us. The point of divergence, to our great joy, is that in Christ the King our hopes are even now fulfilled. His kingdom can never fail. When Pilate asked Jesus if he is a King, Jesus replied that his kingdom is not of this world (John 18: 36). He is the only king who can satisfy our hunger and thirst for a world filled with and *powered by* love, peace and righteousness, because his triumph over the forces of the world is total.

It should not surprise us, then, that the kings and presidents that we set up to govern over us fall short of our hopes. The last king of Thailand was a notable exception to the corrupting nature of power. He was revered almost like a god, but he used his long rule to serve his people well, especially in his duty of care to the poor. Several years ago I was privileged to take groups of students each year to Northern Thailand to visit tribal villages and to stay in one of them. Over time we saw great changes in their lives. Their wooden huts with leaf roofing and dirt floors were replaced with modern houses. They had piped fresh water, electricity, a clinic and a school, even a community hall with a much prized television. The transformation was the result of one of many projects initiated by the king. He promised that the government would fund these modern amenities if they would stop growing opium poppies. And he did not leave them with nothing to live on. He helped them to make a new start in growing flowers and herbs for the legal markets. It is another example of a king using his authority to give people hope in a better life.

In the Bible, King David and King Solomon are blessed by God. They were far from perfect men but above all else they loved God. In Deuteronomy 17 we can read the qualifications that God set out for a king of Israel. He must be chosen by God, an Israelite who recognises the authority of God. He must not acquire great wealth and he should read God's law daily and rule according to God's principles. In short, God's king is faithful, separate from pagan influence, guiding his people to righteous living. He is like a shepherd who cares for his sheep and keeps them safe. Many kings who followed David fell far short of God's call on their position of privilege....and the pattern of failure has continued all around the world since the golden days of David and Solomon. How wonderful for us all, then, that God sent us his own Son to be the final word on kingship. Matthew reminds us (in 12: 42) of what Jesus said: *One greater than Solomon is here.* God's final choice for the ideal king is Jesus the Messiah. He must be our choice as well.

Jesus was born to be God's King. The angel Gabriel explains to Mary (Luke 1: 32-33) that Jesus will be called the Son of the Most High. *The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David, and he will reign over Israel for ever; his Kingdom will never end.* He was never the kind of king who wields power over his people, defeating political enemies or evil foes in war (even though many in his time hoped he would). He was never the kind of king who sets himself apart from his people in some splendid palace. In Jesus, God reveals the real qualities of kingship: one who is worthy of our devotion and allegiance; one who will never let us down; one who goes with us through all the storms of life and brings us out alive and whole on the other side. We know this because he used his power on earth to mend and heal broken bodies and souls; we know this because he joined in solidarity with the rejected and the oppressed, identifying with our power struggles, not by condemning and confronting them, but by allowing himself to be overpowered by them, as we all are. He chose to lay down his own life. Jesus *passed the self-same way* as those who sacrifice their lives to protect the lives of others, as the hymn of Remembrance so movingly states. More than this, *how much more*, Jesus in his dying has made our life free from all tyranny and fear. For God has raised him from the tomb and from the earth, and crowned him as his Son and heir to his throne. His rule over our lives is his example and the freedom to follow in the way he himself lived and died. For this Jesus has promised us a share in his risen life.

*Who is on the Lord's side?
By Thy call of mercy, by Thy grace divine,*

We are on the Lord's side: Saviour, we are Thine. Amen

Hymn MP 649 – The King of love my shepherd is <https://youtu.be/huZvQD87Clk>

The King of love my shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never
I nothing lack if I am His and He is mine for ever.

Where steams of living water flow my ransomed soul He leadeth
And where the verdant pastures grow with food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed; and yet in love He sought me,
And on His shoulder gently laid, and home rejoicing brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill with Thee, dear Lord, beside me;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still, Thy cross before to guide me.

Thou spreadst a table in my sight; Thy unction grace bestoweth;
And O what transport of delight from Thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days Thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise within Thy house forever.

Prayers for the Church and the world

Let us come before the Throne of Grace and pray to the Lord for pardon and peace in the Church and in all the world.

Lord God, our Father and our King, bless and guide those who rule the nations and all who have authority over others. May they govern wisely and with concern for the needs of all who fall within their care, whatever their race, circumstances or political group. May they govern in Your name so that justice and peace may prevail. Where nations are divided, may they know that true kingship is Yours alone; may they be reconciled through the love of Jesus Christ. We pray for the stranger that God has especially asked us to protect, those who come among us and those far away. Save and release all who suffer under power that is abused and grant shelter and hope to the world's refugees and to every person seeking safety from tyranny. Inspire our community to relieve suffering and hardship.....the hungry, the sick, the lonely and bereaved, those in prison..... through our human hands You call us to extend Your welcome to people of every race and background and to bring the care that comes from Your love and power.

We pray for Your church, the sign of Your reign, and ministers of Your grace. Keep her strong under Christ our Head, faithful in words and deeds to the inheritance of his sacrificial love, and close in love and fellowship with You and with one another. May we always rejoice in You, our Heavenly King, and – by Your grace – live our lives as witnesses to Your greater glory.

Loving God, You have taught us that the power of the heart is greater than the power of wealth and might. Hear us as we pray for the joyful day when our true King will come in great glory to gather us to Him – as the good shepherd safely gathers in His flock – that we may join with all who have gone before us and live with You for ever. Come, risen Jesus, eternal king. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn MP 102 –Come, Thou long-expected Jesus<https://youtu.be/JEEed0uWnDGs>

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in Thee.

Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver; born a child and yet a King;
Born to reign in us forever; now Thy gracious Kingdom bring.

By Thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone:
By Thine all-sufficient merit raise us to Thy glorious throne.

Blessing

Christ our King make us faithful and strong to do His will, that we may reign with Him in glory.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. **Amen.**