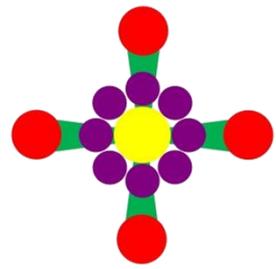


**The Benefice of
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme
22 November 2020
The Feast of Christ the King**



The Greeting

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit

All Blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen

Confession

Jesus says, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand."

So let us turn away from sin and turn to Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

**All 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**

Our loving God washes us through and through
that we may be cleansed from our sin
and empowered to live lives
worthy of our calling as children of God. **Amen.**

The Collect

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 forever. **Amen**

First Reading: Ephesians 1:15 - end

For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice. Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

Thanks be to God for the gift of his word

The Gospel: Matthew 25:31 - end

‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed

you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'

Thanks be to God for the Gospel of Christ

Reflection: Chris Wilcock

This Sunday sees us come to the end of the church year. Traditionally on this Sunday we reflect on Jesus as King. In Matthew's scene of the Last Judgement, Christ is portrayed as a stern King and Judge. But this image shouldn't be over-emphasised. Ezekiel has a gentler image – that of a good shepherd, who while caring for all his sheep, shows particular care for the weak and wounded ones. This was the image Christ himself used to describe his person and mission. His followers are required to show that they truly belong to his kingdom by their service to the weak and wounded of society.

I think it is true to say that people's basic material needs have to be taken care of before any kind of higher life is possible. In many countries these needs have been taken care of. So, does this mean that the words of Jesus about feeding the hungry or clothing the naked are no longer relevant? In today's uncertain world, no indeed.

Mother Teresa said this: "The worst disease in the world today is the feeling of being unwanted, and the greatest evil is lack of love. What the poor need even more than food, clothes and shelter, is to be wanted." Hence, the words of Christ are as relevant today more than ever.

In today's context we might re-phrase Jesus' words in Matthew's gospel something like this:

The King will say to those on his left:

Go away from me, I was hungry, not for food but for a smile, and all I got from you were unfriendly looks, all I needed were some words of encouragement but all I got from you was criticism. I just needed a word of appreciation, but you didn't even notice me.

I was thirsty, not for a drink, but for a token of recognition, but all you did was nag and moan at me. I was just looking for friendship but you ignored me. I was thirsty for a little companionship but you couldn't be bothered.

I was a stranger but you refused to have anything to do with me. I was a child but you told your children not to play with me because my clothes were scruffy. I was your next door neighbour but wouldn't allow me into your club because I wasn't quite in your class.

I was naked, not because I didn't have any clothes, but because I lacked self-esteem, and you refused to cover me. I had all my self-confidence stripped away and you made me feel the chill wind of disapproval.

I was sick, not in body, but with doubt and anxiety and you never even noticed. I was wounded by failure and disappointment and you couldn't care less. I was in the depths of depression needing hope and all you did was blame me.

I was a prisoner, not behind bars, but of loneliness and you gave me the cold shoulder. I was a prisoner of guilt, and you could have set me free by forgiving me, but you didn't, you just let me languish there to punish me.

I was homeless, not for want of a home of bricks and mortar, but for the want of tenderness and affection, and you left me out in the cold. I was homeless for want of love and acceptance, and you locked me out of your heart.

Then the King will turn to those on his right and say:

Come, you who have been blessed by my Father.

I was hungry for a smile, and you gave it to me. I was hungry for a word of encouragement, and you praised me. I was hungry for a word of appreciation and you thanked me.

I was thirsty for a word of recognition, and you took notice of me. I was thirsty for a sign of friendship and you telephoned me. I was thirsty for a little companionship, and you went out of your way to stop and chat to me.

I was a stranger, and you made me feel welcome. I was socially inferior to you, but by your acceptance you built me up.

I was naked for want of self-esteem, and you covered me with self-worth. I was stripped of self-confidence, and you dressed me with the cloak of confidence.

I was sick with worry and doubt, and by your cheerful attitude you eased my burden. I was in the depths of depression and by your supportive and patient attitude you gave me hope.

I was a prisoner of loneliness, and by your friendship you released me. I was a prisoner of guilt, and through your forgiveness you broke the chains of guilt. I was homeless for want of tenderness and affection, and you embraced me. I was homeless for want of sympathy and understanding, and you listened to me. The question we must ask ourselves is, how much of the act done to the person in need must be a conscious act done to, or for Jesus, and how much of it is an instinctive action that we undertake in response to need, however and whenever we encounter it.

What the king in the story seems to praise is the instinctive response to human need and not for the act done, or not done, on the basis of whether a person was deserving or not, nor even whether we were doing so consciously as our Christian duty. What matters is our openness to respond compassionately to human need.

There are lots of things we could do if we were more aware and more sensitive. It's not so much a question of giving things, but of giving of ourselves – of our time, our energy and our love. Thus we will serve Christ and help to build his Kingdom.

In the evening of our lives we will be judged on love.

(Acknowledgments: Flor McCarthy, SBD – New Sunday and Holy Day Liturgies / ROOTS for Churches Ltd – Adult & All Age Resources)

Affirmation of Faith

**We believe in God the Father,
From whom every family
In heaven and on earth is named.
We believe in God the Son,
Who lives in our hearts through faith,
And fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
Who strengthens us with power from on high.**

We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession led by Margaret Harrison

Loving God, the Father of us all we pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ, for the Church which is your family on earth today. We pray especially for the part of your family here in our benefice, for our clergy and leaders who are working so hard to maintain contact and care for us during such difficult times.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, whose majesty is above the heavens, guide with your Holy Spirit those who hold the highest offices of state. Give them wisdom as they struggle with the concerns of the day. Strengthen them to do what is right and save them from everything that corrupts the will. Bring us to that day when we shall dwell in your courts in righteousness and peace through him to whom is owed true allegiance now and always.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In these times of crisis, Lord we ask you to be with those who have lost their job and seek paid work. Lord hold those who are anxious about making ends meet and feel frustrated at loss of position and place. Open opportunities for talents to be channelled constructively that dignity may be restored, hope renewed and none feel that they are without worth or value, for in your sight all are a unique act of your creation and purpose and in your love we flourish, now and always.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, we bring to you our worries for the world today. We pray for places where there have been earthquakes, flooding and fires. We pray for places where people are fighting and in danger. We pray for places where people are hungry and thirsty. We pray for places where people distrust each other because they belong to a different religion or race. Help us to trust in you and find a new stillness and peace.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, we bring to you our own personal worries today, whatever they may be. We have worries about school and about our work. We have worries about our children, our parents, and our friends. We have difficult tasks to do and difficult decisions to make. We worry what the future may bring. Help us to trust in you and find a new stillness and peace.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, we bring to you our worries for all who are in need of healing today. We pray for people who are sick or in pain, in hospital and at home. We pray for those who are frightened and feel that everything is going wrong. We pray for those who are sad and lonely. Help us to trust in you and find a new stillness and peace.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of compassion, bless all members of the emergency services, and our key workers as they go to the aid of people without judgement of circumstances or cause. Give them strength to face the traumas they meet, empathy for the distress encountered and skill to assist as required, for in caring for those in their charge they embody your loving service to neighbours in need, Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of time and eternity we thank you that all our times are in your hands. Rejoicing in your faithfulness we celebrate the life of our benefice in stories of faith and hope, in worship offered, disciples gathered and communities transformed by your reconciling love. As we give you thanks and praise, give us your vision for this place that we cherish, help us to walk your way with its people and pour upon us those gifts we need to work with you that, filled with your Spirit, your church may serve you here with strength and joy.

Merciful Father:

Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive
those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

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**

Sending Out

Christ our King make you faithful and strong to do his will, that you may reign with him in glory; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Final Acclamation

Lift up your heads, O gates:
Be lifted up, you everlasting doors:

All And the King of glory shall come in.

“Who is the King of glory?”

**All “The Lord, strong and mighty,
The Lord who is mighty in battle.”**

Lift up your heads, O gates:
Be lifted up, you everlasting doors:

All And the King of glory shall come in.

“Who is this King of glory?”

**All “The Lord of hosts,
He is the King of glory.”**

Go in the light and peace of Christ the King! Alleluia!

All Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!