



**Christ the King**

**Welcome**

Welcome to Digital Church.

We use a three-year lectionary which means at the start of Advent each year the lectionary moves our focus from one synoptic Gospel to another. This year we have been using Matthew so next week we will start our journey through Mark.

We are recording this service from Emsworth Church and Pastoral Centre which is found on the border between Hampshire and West Sussex.

St Digital Church has developed over time and we would value your comments, and any suggestions how you would like us to go forward.

If you would like us to prayer for you and alongside you there is a dedicated and confidential email address.

**Call to Worship**

The Lord is our Shepherd.

**All We are the people of God's pasture the sheep of God's hand.**

God will see the lost, feed the hungry, and strengthen the weak.

**All But the proud and power-hungry will be fed with justice.**

**Hymn At the name of Jesus (StF 317)**

**1** At the name of Jesus  
every knee shall bow,  
every tongue confess him  
King of Glory now.  
'Tis the Father's pleasure  
we should call him Lord,  
who from the beginning  
was the mighty Word.

**2** Humbled for a season,  
to receive a name  
from the lips of sinners  
unto whom he came,  
faithfully he bore it  
spotless to the last,  
brought it back victorious  
when from death he passed:

**3** Bore it up triumphant  
with its human light,  
through all ranks of creatures  
to the central height,  
to the throne of Godhead,  
to the Father's breast;  
filled it with the glory  
of that perfect rest.

**4** In your hearts enthrone him;  
there let him subdue  
all that is not holy,  
all that is not true;  
crown him as your captain  
in temptation's hour:  
let his will enfold you  
in its light and power.

**5** For this same Lord Jesus  
shall return again,  
with his Father's glory,  
with his angel train;  
all the wreaths of empire  
meet upon his brow,  
and our hearts confess him  
King of Glory now.

**Title** At the name of Jesus  
**By** Caroline Maria Noel (1817–1877)  
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**Prayer of Confession**

With sincere and repentant hearts, let us name our sins against Christ and one another.

**All Sovereign God,  
we confess that we are not ready for your heavenly realm.  
You guide us toward right paths but we refuse to follow where you lead.  
You love and feed and care for us, but we fail to love and serve others.  
Forgive us merciful God, so that we may return to your fold and rejoice in your presence;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord, the Lamb upon the throne. Amen**

**Declaration of Forgiveness**

However long we wander, however far we stray.

God's steadfast love endures forever.

Siblings, be assured: in Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

Almighty God, you raised Christ from the dead and established him as Lord over every rebellious power.

Give us grace to serve wisely and faithful and that the world may see the glorious inheritance among the saints and recognise the freedom of joyful obedience in Jesus Christ in whose name we pray. **Amen**

Lord of the teasing riddle, whose questions undo our certainty and set us on a different path: give us a heart of passions, a searching mind, gentle strength of body and unseen depths of soul, that we might love you wholly and our neighbour as our self; through Jesus Christ, the law of grace. **Amen**

### **Bible Reading**      **Ezekiel 34 v11-16, 20-24**

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.

### **Gospel Reading**      **Matthew 25 v31-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.'

### **Reflection**

Sunday the 26th of November is what the Church calls the feast of Christ the King. What does it mean to live these words faithfully and allow Christ our King to rule our hearts?

It means to live with the character of God that we see enacted in the prophet Ezekiel's words, a shepherding, loving God, who searches and seeks, strengthens, protects and saves; to live with the compassion of God, who in Jesus meets and brings life and hope to the most vulnerable and weakest; it means to create the community of God, centred on Christ, where all are welcomed and all have unique and wonderful gifts to offer and share; and it means to always be seeking to live in God's kairos moment – the moment of possibility and potential, the moment of quiet, the moment of resurrection, where God brings life, even when all is lost. Character, Compassion, Community and Kairos. God expects us to do what he does, to live with that same saving character. To go out of our way and use our energies in all the ways we can to restore God's relationship with people. How can we dare to give our second best when God gives us everything. God invites us to be that bridge that others use to find their way back to God. It doesn't necessarily mean we have to pour ourselves out day-by-day from early in the morning to late at night. But sometimes it does. God offers everything to bring his people back into relationship with him. 'I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep' he says. 'I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed...'

When we have known that shepherding hand of God, who has searched for us and saved us, and given all that he has to find us, we will want to go to great lengths too, allowing God's character to be shaped and formed in us by his love. We're called to live with the compassion of God. In Matthew's vision of the day of judgement, we hear Christ the King telling those who have tended compassionately to those most in need, that in doing this they have served and cared for him, and to those who have not done so, again that they have failed to care for him. In both cases they reply, 'Lord, when was it?' They don't realise that it is in the ordinary actions of life that God sees of what we are made. They mark us. What Jesus tells them is not just that they have done a good thing in caring for the vulnerable, but that these acts of kindness and generous love, for needy people, have a deeper dimension,

they are where they will meet him and know God. Our meeting with God in Christ is bound up with our care for the least and the lost in our society and our world; the ones we exclude, and fear and lock up and despise and on whom we turn our backs – the refugee, prisoner, poor, hungry, homeless. He is a servant king and his kingdom is all about serving others. The one who said; 'Just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many. 'This is Christ the King come down to meet us in the care for each person, in the sacrament of every moment. It means that it is in the small acts of grace and kindness, that we are all capable of, not the grand gestures, that we find God's kingdom open wide for each of us and Christ there to meet us in another's face and need. We see Christ in them and offer Christ to them. Who doesn't know how to do these simple acts? But how to make that call to service the centre of our lives? If we are centred on this Christ-like compassion, offering dignity to each person and drawn into loving regard for one another, we will build the community of God. At the centre of it is the loving regard for Christ the King, who himself is the exiled, rejected, hungry, thirsty, lonely, naked, imprisoned, crucified one. The one whom God raised to life and set as our Lord, above all things. This is the source of the character and compassion and community of God. This is the moment and place that we live from. The kairos moment of God that is full of hope and possibility. We are the body of Christ the King, shaped around the wounded, vulnerable, risen one, wounded and vulnerable ourselves, sent to share his love with all whom we meet. **Amen**

### Hymn The Lord's my Shepherd (StF 481)

**1** The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;  
 he makes me lie in pastures green,  
 he leads me by the still, still waters,  
 his goodness restores my soul.  
*And I will trust in you alone,  
 and I will trust in you alone,  
 for your endless mercy follows me,  
 your goodness will lead me home.*

**2** He guides my ways in righteousness,  
 and he anoints my head with oil;  
 and my cup — it overflows with joy,  
 I feast on his pure delights.  
*And I will trust in you alone . . .*

**3** And though I walk the darkest path —  
 I will not fear the evil one,  
 for you are with me, and your rod and staff  
 are the comfort I need to know.  
*And I will trust in you alone . . .*

**Title** *The Lord's my shepherd*  
**By** *Stuart Townend (b. 1963)*

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### Prayers

Holy God, you welcome us into your joy and entrust us with your gospel.

In hope for the world to come and with love for the world you made,  
 we offer our prayers for your church, your earth, and your people.

For your faith communities that we represent, that your good news may be proclaimed to all.

God of grace, **hear our prayer**

For oppressors, that they might know justice, and those oppressed, that they might know peace.

God of grace, **hear our prayer**

For your creation, that we may be the caretakers you intend.

God of grace, **hear our prayer**

For the young, that they might be nurtured in love

God of grace, **hear our prayer**

For the old, that they might be secure in your care.

God of grace, **hear our prayer**

For those who fight the demons of addiction.

God of grace, **hear our prayer**

For those who face an early death and those they leave behind.

God of grace, **hear our prayer**

For all those who care for the suffering and those in their charge.

God of grace, **hear our prayer**

For all of those about whom we worry and those whose troubles are known only to you.

God of grace, **hear our prayer**

All this we pray with gratitude for your eternal love and extravagant grace; in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen**

## The Lord's Prayer

We share together in what ever tongue is your first language and whatever form of this prayer you use.

**All** 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

## Hymn Rejoice the Lord is king (StF 335) Chet Valley

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| <p><b>1</b> Rejoice, the Lord is King!<br/>Your Lord and King adore;<br/>mortals, give thanks, and sing,<br/>and triumph evermore:<br/><i>Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;<br/>rejoice! Again I say: rejoice!</i></p> <p><b>2</b> Jesus the Saviour reigns,<br/>the God of truth and love;<br/>when he had purged our stains,<br/>he took his seat above:<br/><i>Lift up your heart . . .</i></p> | <p><b>3</b> His kingdom cannot fail,<br/>he rules both earth and heaven;<br/>the keys of death and hell<br/>are to our Jesus given:<br/><i>Lift up your heart. . .</i></p> <p><b>4</b> He sits at God's right hand<br/>till all his foes submit,<br/>and bow to his command,<br/>and fall beneath his feet:<br/><i>Lift up your heart . . .</i></p> | <p><b>5</b> Rejoice in glorious hope;<br/>Jesus the Judge shall come,<br/>and take his servants up<br/>to their eternal home:<br/><i>We soon shall hear the archangel's voice;<br/>God's trumpet-call shall sound: rejoice!</i></p> |
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**Title** *Rejoice, the Lord is King!*

**By** *Charles Wesley (1707–1788)*

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## Final Prayers

May the good news of the kingdom spread and enrich all peoples and cultures everywhere over the wide world.

May the kingdom of Christ grow among us as a kingdom of justice, love and peace.

May the light of Christ's truth enlighten all.

And the blessing...

Ref: Feasting on the Word Worship Companion liturgies for year A, volume 2 (Kimberly Bracken Long, editor)

### Ed. Notes:

**Kairos** - an ancient Greek word meaning "opportunity," "season," or "fitting time."

Chronos - another Greek word for "time". A sequence of moments was expressed as chronos, emphasizing the duration of the time; an appointed time was expressed as kairos, with no regard for the length of the time.

Chronos - more linear and quantitative,

Kairos - more nonlinear and qualitative.

The Bible uses the word kairos and its cognates 86 times in the New Testament (e.g., Matthew 8:29; Luke 19:44; and Acts 24:25). The word often includes the idea of an opportunity or a suitable time for an action to take place. When we "seize the day," we are taking advantage of the kairos given to us.

Kairos - related to the Greek word kara ("head"). A kairos is a time when things "come to a head," requiring decisive action.

DJA 24/11/23