



Welcome to
All Saints
Kings Heath
Your Parish Church
in the Diocese of Birmingham

Questioning Authority



The Ancient of Days, William Blake's response to the book of Daniel and his own personal experience envisioning God. (Fitzwilliam Museum)

Holy Communion

Christ the King: the Last Sunday before Advent

21st November 2021

We gather

At home, have ready in an honoured place a portion of food and something to drink. It may be bread and wine or something else. Perhaps light a candle to mark the beginning of our shared act of worship.

As we gather in Church, we invite all to continue to wear masks when entering and moving around Church, but to remove them if you wish when in your place, rather as we do when going for a different kind of feast in a café or restaurant. We continue to respect each other's physical distance and encourage conversation outside Church rather than mingling inside.

We imagine everyone in their homes around the parish, and those in Church, united in preparing for prayer.

SONG as we gather An army of ordinary people

1. An army of ordinary people, a kingdom where love is the key,
a city, a light to the nations, heirs to the promise are we.
A people whose life is in Jesus, a nation together we stand.
Only through grace are we worthy, inheritors of the land.

*A new day is dawning, a new age to come,
when the children of promise shall flow together as one:
a truth long neglected, but the time has now come,
when the children of promise shall flow together as one.*

2. A people without recognition, but with him a destiny sealed,
called to a heavenly vision: his purpose shall be fulfilled.
Come, let us stand strong together, abandon ourselves to the King.
His love shall be ours for ever, this vict'ry song we shall sing.

(words & music: Dave Bilbrough)

Priest: Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you all. **Amen.**

NOTICES

HYMN [Christ is the King! O friends rejoice](#)

1. Christ is the King! O friends rejoice;
brothers and sisters, with one voice
make the world know he is your
choice.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

2. O magnify the Lord, and raise
anthems of joy and holy praise
for Christ's brave saints of ancient
days.

3. O Christian women, Christian men,
all the world over, seek again

the Way disciples followed then.

4. Christ through all ages is the same:
place the same hope in his great
name,
with the same faith his Word proclaim.

5. Let love's unconquerable might
your scattered companies unite
in service to the Lord of light.

6. So shall God's will on earth be done,
new lamps be lit, new tasks begun,
and the whole Church at last be one.

(words: George Kennedy Allen Ball alt; music: melody from Melchior Vulpius's 'Gesangbuch' [1609])

We pray: **Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known
and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of
our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may
perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

We seek forgiveness

CONFESSION

Deacon: Imagining Christ as King, all authority is brought into his revealing light.
We prepare to confess our individual part in the world's dysfunction: the
abuse of power, the blaming of others, the obscuring of truth.

Silence

**Lord God, we have sinned against you;
we have done evil in your sight.
We are sorry and repent.
Have mercy on us according to your love.
Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.
Renew a right spirit within us
and restore us to the joy of your salvation,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

FORGIVENESS *is prayed for at home and in church is declared by the priest:*

[May] the almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given *us* a kingdom
that cannot be destroyed, forgive *us our* sins, open *our* eyes to God's

truth, strengthen *us* to do God's will and give *us* the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE GLORIA

Glory! Glory! Glory to God!
Glory! Glory! Glory to God!

1. Glory to God in the heights of the heavens.
Peace to God's people, all people on earth.
2. Son of the Father, all glory and worship;
praise and thanksgiving to you, Lamb of God.
3. You take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us, receive our prayer.
4. Seated in pow'r at the right of the Father,
Jesus alone is the Lord, the Most High.
5. And with the Spirit of love everlasting,
reigning in glory for ever. Amen.

(words & music: George Salazar, trans/arr Paul Inwood)

We pray THE COLLECT for the Last Sunday before Advent

God the Father, help us to hear the call of Christ the King and to follow in his service, whose kingdom has no end; for he reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, one glory. **Amen.**

READING [Daniel 7:9-10, 13, 14](#)

READING [Revelation 1:4b-8](#)

HYMN He's got the whole world in his hand

1. He's got the whole world in his hand. *(x3)*
He's got the whole world in his hand.
2. He's got you and me, brother, in his hand. *(x3)*
He's got the whole world in his hand.
3. He's got you and me, sister, in his hand. *(x3)*
He's got the whole world in his hand.

4. He's got the little tiny baby in his hand. (x3)
He's got the whole world in his hand.

5. He's got ev'rybody here in his hand. (x3)
He's got the whole world in his hand.

(words & music: Traditional, arr Christopher Tambling)

GOSPEL READING [John 18:33-37](#)

Deacon: Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John
All: Glory to you, O Lord.

At the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON from David

Capricious, self-possessed, moody, vindictive, then regretful, known for the way his face was particularly ugly when he was angry, renowned for embarrassing u-turns, King Nebuchadnezzar cut a pathetic yet frightening figure. He was comical, but deadly. Daniel, from whose visions we have read, stood before him with remarkable poise and steadiness of purpose. Nebuchadnezzar had plundered Jerusalem and Daniel and the Hebrews were in exile in Babylon. Famously thrown to the lions and his friends thrown into a furnace, nothing would turn him from praying to YHWH. Nothing would make him bow to the statue of the King. A similar pattern would re-occur with the King's equally self-indulgent Son Belshazzar. There is a quiet dignity about Daniel which, silently, reflects back onto the regime its ridiculous self importance, the energy with which it justifies itself, the hurrying to and fro of the people who think they should have all the dignity. The writer of the text conveys this comedy with hilarious repetition and rhythm. It's a good book to read aloud. If we found the right comical voice to record it, probably it would make a really good audio book.¹

One of the important things about Daniel and his fellow Hebrews Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, is that he did step up and play a part in the life of Babylon. He helped the Kings interpret dreams; he was part of the civil service; he used deferential courtly language when speaking to the King. At several points, Daniel seems to be quite glad to be part of the Babylonian set up and he is worried at the thought of the fall of that empire. (7:15ff) But he did not lose sight of who really runs the world. He knew always that from the King to the slave, every soul is under the judgment of YHWH. Indeed, this perspective made him quite gracious. When the King's adviser's couldn't interpret his dream, he was typically going to slaughter them, but Daniel headed off the execution saying "don't...I'll interpret the dream" (2:24).

¹ I have articulated before my belief that our current Prime Minister is in the wrong job. It is cruel that we put him in a role that is so bad for him; so distorting of his character. I believe he could be a very good Jackanory presenter, quite quickly becoming loved as a national treasure, adored but in a safe way. I wonder how Daniel would sound, read by him once relieved of office.

Our memory of empire is always conflicted. We often articulate its brutality and injustice. This text can help us also, without diluting that critique, to recognise the good things that happen under empires: the building work, the civil service, the modernising, the roads and the wine. Daniel certainly shows that being a person of faith and integrity does not mean withdrawing from that world. Indeed the whole book could challenge us to pray anew for all involved in advising, administrating, interpreting, policy shaping. It especially highlights the vulnerability of those who have to break bad news to people in power. You can choose for yourself which Government ministers behave most like Nebuchadnezzar and which departments' civil servants, therefore, need our special attention in prayer. It's a book that very much encourages us to discern where the power lies and to study the character of those who wield it. But it also encourages us to notice where authority lies – which is a very different question - and whose presence reveals the truth of those around them.

Daniel has experimented with visions of the political world, playing a game of "If such and such a king was an animal, which animal would he be?" In today's passage, that same God-given imagination is daring to glimpse the God we cannot see: an ancient (that is timeless, not decrepit) human form, white hair conveying wisdom and authority of experience; fire representing unimaginable power; cloud evoking mystery; wheels on the throne conveying speed of far reaching judgement and insight. Once he has met this Paternal/Maternal God, the culmination of the vision is the unification of a diverse humanity. When humanity became too arrogant, building the tower of Babel, God scattered us, speech shattering into many languages. Now, once God's authority is properly remembered and honoured, God can draw humanity together again, praising him in different languages, but with harmonious voices. It is important to remember that Daniel had this vision while in exile, while the foreign kings – his oppressors and employers by turns – were apparently holding all the cards. This vision does promise his Hebrew people a kind of victory, but one that saves their oppressors along with them.

A few hundred years later, Jesus stood before an official of another great empire, who was about to declare him innocent, but then send him to his death. We may have many reasons to want Jesus to stand before humanity and be judged. Is he up to the job? Has he brought peace or trouble? Why didn't he save our friend, our child, our lover from death? If he's in charge of the world, why have invaders slaughtered Aboriginals and Incas, and traded humans as slaves? Why have individuals been able to wreak havoc with their suicide bombs? Who are you, Jesus, to talk to us of salvation?

Jesus stands before Pilate. Countless paintings, sculptures and latterly films have caught the pathos of this scene: the sharp-edged fine stones of the Palace a cold backdrop to the forlorn, unarmed man who will be dead in a few hours. Jesus says a few words to Pilate, about truth, about authority, about where his confidence is anchored. It is not in the clumsy hierarchies of this world. Even before the vindication of resurrection, Jesus' quiet presence seems to draw something out of the people around him. He stands so still, but Pilate, supposedly the man in charge, hurries in and out of his own palace to meet the religious leaders who won't defile themselves by coming in. The man in charge rushes out to the crowd to try and get them to let Jesus off. He hurries in to Jesus to try and pin everything on him so he won't have him on his conscience. What is striking is that Pilate is blown about by circumstance. He's afraid of the

crowd. Meanwhile the religious authorities claiming purity by not going into their oppressor's palace look ridiculous because in their ritual purity they are manipulating an innocent man's death. The crowd look capricious because they've followed Jesus, lapping up miracles, loving the frisson of authority but now want the quick cheap thrill of an execution to get them through another day of disappointment with their little lives. The still figure of Jesus exposes the truth of those around him just by being there. Echoing in our minds by this terrible scene are the opening words of John, that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and the world that was made through him did not recognise him. Except it did. They know. Pilate knows, the religious leaders know and the crowd know. He draws the truth out of us all.

As we watch the drama unfold, our own capriciousness, all the leaders who make themselves look busy but are in control of remarkably little, all who want to project blame onto others and all of us concealing our disappointments behind sensational distractions, all of us are judged by the silent figure who has no power, but seems to exude authority.

Soon we will affirm our faith in words from a very early creed found in Philippians chapter 2. In it we describe God coming to be with us in our unglamorous, manipulative world, emptying himself of power to test his authority in the grime of our world. He reaches the lowest point, then rises to new life, scooping us in his arms and taking us with him. We will sing it to a tune that often stirs imperious chest swelling pride because we, quite wrongly, sing and twist Blake's challenging words about a country that thinks it's great but he believes is sick. We can perhaps feel the irony. Truth be told, God would seem a less credible judge of this world had he not come to be with us in the worst of it. In that sense, God has fleetingly been under our scrutiny; our judgement. But we can't pretend it's an equal balance. Look at us. See how busy we try to look. See how we pass on the blame and feed off others' failure. See how cruel we can be; how self-important. See how "Earth's proud empires pass away." God is judge and sometimes someone who trusts God unselfconsciously brings that judgement among us with unnerving authority. I was quizzed recently by a teenager enquiring about the faith, but scrutinising the church's dysfunction over sexuality. They were the authority figure drawing out and exposing the prejudice of the huge historic institution. It was a good moment of reversal and judgement.

Daniel and Jesus require us to stay engaged with the gritty realities of this world and its politics, but they somehow keep the end goal in view: a unified humanity, humble and happy before our creator. That view, far from naïve, allows them to see straight through the power play and self-deception. As we found last week, a vision without hope is not realistic. They help those around them to interpret the world wisely. Kept humble by the scrutiny of that teenager and others, we might pray for the church to have confidence not in its institutional clout, but in God's vision of human unity. Then we might re-learn to help the world around us interpret power; to perceive the u-turns and capricious behaviours; to know when the person with power lacks authority; yet never to de-humanise or disengage; to hold the hope of achieving a healthy common life. For we know that although Pilate holds high office, although he is clad in armour and purple, although he has power of life and death, although he has a ruthless, highly trained army at his disposal and although he looks at a penniless man from the remote provinces, in his heart of hearts he knows, and we know it is Pilate who stands before Jesus.

We affirm our faith

We stand and at home, if able, we turn to look in the direction of Church,

Deacon: We affirm our faith in God singing words based on Philippians Chapter 2.

Though one with God, yet not by might
did Christ his equal status claim;
instead he gave up all he had
and as a humble servant came,
in worldly form, of woman born,
he lived at one with human kind,
and strode and stumbled to the cross,
that we the path to life might find.

Therefore God raised him after death,
raised him to reign in earth and heaven:
The one who we considered least,
the greatest name by God was given.
And so, to honour Jesus' name,
all who have life or are to be
shall kneel proclaiming 'Christ is Lord!'
and worship God eternally.

Philippians 2:6-1, versified by John Bell and Graham Maule
© Iona Community. Tune: Jerusalem

INTERCESSIONS from Christopher Pietroni

In a world where power too often serves the powerful, where we mistake dominance for leadership and where service is perceived as weakness, we pray for the unfolding of Christ's Kingship in us. When we are tempted by the charisma, superficial authority and apparent certainty of others because we find it comforting, we pray for the willingness to follow your disturbing and disruptive kingship instead. When we feel powerless in the face of individual and systemic oppression, we pray for the confidence to follow your lead relying only on the transforming power of your Spirit.

Creator, Redeemer, Inspirer **hear our prayer.**

We pray for leaders of all kinds, in all places and at all levels. Leaders of nations, international organisations and political parties. Leaders who protest with their words, their bodies and their lives. Leaders who lead at the top of organisations and leaders who lead at the frontline.

Leaders who lead in their families, amongst their friends and with their colleagues. Leaders who confront us with uncomfortable truths and challenge us to be more than we imagine we can be. Leaders who comfort and work for justice and peace. We pray that each of us may know the leadership you call us to, and that all who exercise leadership may do so after your example, our Servant-King.

Creator, Redeemer, Inspirer **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the leaders in our Church. For those in formal authority, our Archbishop Justin and our Bishop David and here at All Saints for David, Tariro and the whole ministry team. We pray that they exercise their authority wisely, knowing when to confront, when to stand firm, when to bend and when to make space for the leadership of others. We pray for all who exercise leadership in Your church, our innumerable brothers and sisters seeking to grow Your church by drawing ever greater circles of inclusion. We pray for the willingness to recognise, uphold and follow the leadership of all those in Your church, whom we marginalise or diminish.

Creator, Redeemer, Inspirer **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our community here at All Saints, in this parish and for every member of this congregation. We are a congregation; different people with our separate worries and unrevealed anxieties. We pray for each other and for our needs. We pray for the person who may have caused us hurt, for those we never take the trouble to speak to. In a moment of silence we pray for them now. May today be a different day to make a change. We are all the family of Christ our King and we pray that we may honour him in our love for each other.

Creator, Redeemer, Inspirer **hear our prayer.**

We pray for ourselves and for those we love. We pray for your healing and that, through you, we may be a source of comfort to those in physical, mental and spiritual distress. We pray for our neighbours and for harmony in our relationships with them. We pray for ourselves. Forgive us when fail to recognise and value what we have and help us to attend to the gifts beyond value you offer.

Creator, Redeemer, Inspirer **hear our prayer.**

We remember those who have recently died, secure in the knowledge that they have been taken into your eternal peace, especially Josie Peace and June Wright. We pray for those who mourn and grieve close to home and in all parts of the world. May those who console them know the words to say and the silence to hold, the presence to offer and the space to provide. In a moment of silence we pray for those in need known to us.

Creator, Redeemer, Inspirer **hear our prayer.**

THE PEACE

We pause to remember each other: those worshipping at home, and those worshipping in Church, and those we care for who are far away.

"Grace to you and peace from him who is, and was, and is to come."

Confidently we proclaim to one another:

The Peace of the Lord be always with you.

(Revelation 1:4b)

HYMN [I, the Lord of sea and sky](#)

1. I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord.
Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord,
if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

2. I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?

3. I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?

(words & music: Dan Schutte, based on Isaiah 6)

The Table is prepared in Church. At home, now is the time to say the Lord's Prayer (below) and consume the food and drink you have prepared, first praying:

God, we long for Communion. With this symbolic meal stir my hope for the fellowship meal we cannot yet see, and help me wait for it with patience. **Amen.**

(cf Romans 8:2)

We tell the story of God's faithfulness

Priest: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

Glory and dominion be to you, Lord God, for your Word was alive in creation, is present in the power of the Spirit and will come in glory on the Last Day. You made with the house of David an everlasting covenant and your goodness is like the sun on a cloudless morning, gleaming from a the rain on a grassy land. You sent Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth. He freed us from our sins by his blood and made us to be a kingdom of priests serving you for ever. And so with all the company of heaven, we rejoice to sing your praise:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

(music: Dom Gregory Murray)

God of truth, your Son came to testify to you and lead us into all righteousness. You have prepared for us such things as pass our understanding. Send your Holy Spirit upon your people, that your Word may be on their tongue. Sanctify this bread and this cup that they may be for us the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Who, at supper with his disciples, took bread, gave you thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to them saying, "Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

A bell is rung

After supper he took the cup. Again he gave you thanks, and gave it to his disciples saying: "Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

A bell is rung

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did. In him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross. Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation, we proclaim his death and resurrection until he comes in glory.

Deacon: Great is the mystery of faith:

**All: Christ has died,
Christ is risen
Christ will come again.**

God of all beginnings and endings, your Son declared his kingdom was not of this world. Bless the governance of every earthly kingdom, that it may be ruled justly, in spirit and in truth. Visit your children who live in fear, dwell under oppression, experience cruelty or suffer discrimination. Turn struggle into hope, hope into freedom, freedom into justice and justice into love. Bring to those who have never known you, or have forgotten or rejected you, the light of your grace and the thirst for your mercy; until your Son comes with the clouds and all eyes will see him and every tribe and tongue will lift your name on high, ever one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

All languages shall praise God. Each in our mother tongue, as our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**[Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and for ever.] Amen.**

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All: Though we are many, we are one body.
For we all share in one bread.**

Draw near with faith. Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for you. Eat in remembrance that Christ died for you and feed on him in your heart with thanksgiving. **Amen.**

AGNUS DEI

[Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,](#)
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
grant us peace.

(music: Dom Gregory Murray)

We pause to remember all who pray at home, then share the bread, now for us the body of Christ.

ANTHEM *during Communion* [Because the Lord is my shepherd](#)

1. Because the Lord is my shepherd, I have everything I need.
He lets me rest in the meadow and leads me to the quiet streams.
He restores my soul and he leads me in the paths that are right:

*Lord, you are my shepherd, you are my friend.
I want to follow you always, just to follow my friend.*

2. And when the road leads to darkness, I shall walk there unafraid.
Even when death is close I have courage, for your help is there.
You are close beside me with comfort, you are guiding my way:

3. In love you make me a banquet for my enemies to see.
You make me welcome, pouring down honour from your mighty hand;
and this joy fills me with gladness, it is too much to bear:

4. Your goodness always is with me and your mercy I know.
Your loving kindness strengthens me always as I go through life.
I shall dwell in your presence for ever, giving praise to your name:

(words & music: Christopher Walker, based on Psalm 23)

Inside or outside, we are called to serve

Priest: 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.**

All: Almighty God, we thank you for feeding us with your Word [and with the body of Christ]. Strengthen us in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.

HYMN [Thou didst leave thy throne](#)

1. Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown
when thou camest to earth for me,
but in Bethlehem's home was there found no room
for thy holy nativity.

*O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
there is room in my heart for thee.*

2. Heaven's arches rang when the angels sang
and proclaimed thee of royal degree,
but in lowliest birth didst thou come to earth
and in deepest humility.

3. Though the fox found rest, and the bird its nest
in the shade of the cedar tree,
yet the world found no bed for the Saviour's head
in the desert of Galilee.

4. Though thou camest, Lord, with the living word
that should set all thy people free,
yet with treachery, scorn and a crown of thorn
did they bear thee to Calvary.

5. When the heav'ns shall ring and the angels sing
at thy coming to victory,
let thy voice call me home, saying, "Heav'n has room,
there is room at my side for thee."

*(words: Emily Elizabeth Steele Elliot, based on Luke 2:7, adapted by Michael Forster;
music: Timothy Richard Matthews)*

We imagine our scattered fellowship, family, colleagues and neighbours, praying for blessing on all:

*[May] the God hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.***

All: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ, Amen.

VOLUNTARY



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