



Heacham Parish Church



21st November 2021 – Sunday before Advent

Welcome.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

and also with you.

This is the day that the Lord has made

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Hymn: **Jesus is King (MP366)**

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 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.

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.

'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, for ever the same.

We say together:

We have come together in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to hear and receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world, and to seek forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Confession:

Almighty God, long suffering and of great goodness: I confess to you, I confess with my whole heart my neglect and forgetfulness of your commandments, my wrong doing, thinking, and speaking; the hurts I have done to others and the good that I have left undone. O God forgive me, for I have sinned against you; and raise me to newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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.**

Bible reading – John 18:33-37 read by Andrew

A reflection – by Pip

Let's pray. Father help us now to know a little more of you as we look into your word. For we ask in Jesus' name. **Amen**

Today is the Sunday of our church year where we make space to think about Christ the king. As Christians we recognise the kingship of Christ, not only in our own lives, but also in the world. We acknowledge that "God has exalted Christ to the highest place and given him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the father."

It is also the end of our church year, and our thoughts turn to advent. However, we need to pause as today's reading catapults us back to Easter. Holding in tension, the bigger picture, we transport ourselves to Pilate's palace. We are all familiar with these events. Pilate has been doing his level best to rid himself of the Jesus problem. In true political fashion he has been trying to pass the buck. Trying to pass responsibility to anyone in the firing line. We pick up the reading where Pilate is now trying a different approach. Alone with Jesus he questions him. "Are you the king of the Jews?" Classically, as we have often seen, Jesus answers Pilate's question with another question. In effect questioning the questioner who apparently has all the power. I know that we are all supposed to dislike Pilate, traditionally, he along with the Jewish elders carries the can for the death of Jesus. However here Pilate doesn't pull rank exercising his power from a position of authority, he continues, and an extraordinary conversation takes place.

In that conversation Jesus acknowledges that he is a king, but his kingdom is not of this world. Possibly wanting to pin Jesus down and clarify matters Pilate says, "are you a king then?" The text would indicate that Jesus takes these words as a statement, not a question, as Jesus replies that Pilate is correct to say he is a king. Things, however, take a change of direction when Jesus declares the reason for his birth. He came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to him. The reading ends here, but I suspect the term "what is truth?" spoken by Pilate resounds in our minds. However, we read on to discover that the whole truth is lost to Pilate. His glimpse of recognition of Christ the king, lost in a sentence.

So, what do we take away from this reading this morning? Bearing in mind the final Sunday of our church year, I would like to think about beginnings and endings. Bearing in mind Pilate's conversation I would like to explore recognition and unrecognised. Then finally living in the tension of the in between of these issues.

As we think of this current church year drawing to a close we can make space to reflect on the past year. Both as a church and in our

own life. It has been an extraordinary time. Advent 2021 to Christ the king 2021 has been a year like no other. Still in the grip of a pandemic we had to learn to be church in continual changing circumstances. There has been some exciting beginnings and some painful endings both in church and maybe in our own lives. Highlights and lowlights. However, in all the ups and downs and changes we can acknowledge this, Christ the king has been with us all. Faithful even when we have been faithless. Loving even when we have been irritable. Gracious and merciful even when we have been ungrateful and petulant. He has shared our joys and enabled us to praise him and helped us give thanks, even in difficult circumstances. Let's take time later to think over the year. What changes have been made? What kind of adjustments have been necessary? What have we learned, and how is our relationship with Jesus? Has it grown, changed, and deepened?

So, we move on to recognising and not recognising. Pilate had the king of kings before him in person and still did not recognise him. We could judge him harshly but that would make us foolish. How many times, in our walk with Jesus, have we failed to trace the hand of the Lord in any given circumstance? How many times have we decided that the Lord has left us high and dry? How many times have we failed to recognise that the Lord moves in mysterious ways? Failed to recognise that he is still on the throne despite any difficult situation. All we need to do is stop clinging on, let go and believe. To see that things are not just falling apart but falling into place. He is on the throne and knows all. Easy isn't it, not! It's easy to follow Jesus when all is well. We can easily recognise him then. It is easy to see the hand of the Lord when the sun is shining, and life is problem free. How do we learn to live in the best of times and the worst of times that are crammed in to all our beginnings and endings? When we are so often unable to recognise Jesus, or only see his hand in retrospect.

For me it is learning to live in the tension of it all. As followers of Jesus and frail humans, we live in the tension of the in between territories of knowing but doubtful. Believing but not seeing. In all these emotions we hang on to one thing. He who called us is

faithful and will be with us at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. Sometimes we will recognise him and sometimes we won't.

We hang on to the enormous privilege we have because we can say that we are in Christ. We know that he loves us, he died for us, calls us at every stage of our life, draws near to us, and carries us in both sunshine and storm. This is our king Jesus. His kingdom is everlasting and inclusive. It has its own momentum and timing. It is the kingdom we will see in all its fullness when the lord ushers in the fulfilment of the ages.

Let's close with silence and take a moment to recognise the lord's presence. Let's give thanks for what has been, and what will be and the ability to recognise Jesus in all our beginnings, endings, and everything in between. **Amen.**

Hymn: **Meekness and majesty (MP465)**

Meekness and majesty,
manhood and deity,
in perfect harmony,
the man who is God:
Lord of eternity
dwells in humanity,
kneels in humility
and washes our feet.

*O what a mystery,
Meekness and majesty
Bow down and worship,
For this is your God,
This is your God!*

Father's pure radiance,
Perfect in innocence,
Yet learns obedience
To death on a cross:
Suffering to give us life,
Conquering through sacrifice;
And, as they crucify,
Prays, 'Father, forgive.'
O what a mystery....

Wisdom unsearchable,
God the invisible,
Love indestructible
In frailty appears.
Lord of infinity,
Stooping so tenderly,
Lifts our humanity
To the heights of His throne.
O what a mystery....

Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession - Led by Judith and Terry

Heavenly Father, we come before you now, aware of all our failings during the past week and in need of Your mercy, forgive us the times we have not done Your will and prepare us now for the coming week ahead.

This we pray in Your precious name, Amen.

Lord, now that the COP conference has concluded, it's becoming clear that we have not loved our world as you intended us to. We have become selfish and many nations who proclaim action is needed only seek to delay the attempt to bring about solutions that will give to all, especially our young people, a world of beauty, the world you have placed into our care. Lord, you so loved the world you created, show our world leaders the path to restoring the planet to health, that we might love our world and each other.

This we pray in Your precious name, Amen.

Lord, we pray for each other as we meet in this building, for the person sitting in front of us, for the person sitting behind us, to those at our side and those absent from sight, we pray that your love will cradle them, that your love, so freely given to us, can be shared with those we shall meet during the coming days ahead.

This we pray in Your precious name, Amen

Lord we pray for those facing illness today and for those who have been bereaved. In the silence we name them before You Lord. Give them hope and courage. Comfort their pain, calm their fears, and surround them with Your love. Help them to find You in their sorrow and hurt and give us compassion to help those we know in need.

We thank you for the tireless work being done by the NHS. Give them the equipment, the resources, and the strength to carry out their work. Lord we trust in Your wisdom and grace.

Lord, You knew we would find it so hard to love others and ourselves as You speak so often of it in Your word. We thank You that You've offered us the gift of a new life in You. Thank you that Your love is

perfect, never fails, and is unconditional. Nothing can separate us from Your love. Help us to love as You love. So often we just offer words or actions, but it is only when these are filled with the power of Your love that we can make a difference.

Lord, we pray for those who need to feel Your love today. You know our names, our past, the things we have done well and the hurts we have caused and feel. It is never too late to call on You and ask for forgiveness, to know how much You love us and to know we are not alone.

I recently read a book called *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox, and the Horse*...to quote "I'm so small" said the mole.

"Yes" said the boy "but you make a huge difference."

"What do you want to be when you grow up?"

"Kind" said the boy. "What do you think success is?"

"To love" said the mole.

And at the end of the book... "I've realised why we are here" whispered the boy. "To love" said the boy.

"And be loved" said the horse.

Lord we ask that You would accept our prayers and answer them in Your time and Your way. **Amen**

Hymn: **Shine Jesus shine (MP445)**

Lord, the light of Your love is shining,
in the midst of the darkness, shining:
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us;
set us free by the truth You now bring us
shine on me, shine on me

*Shine, Jesus, shine,
fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze,
set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,
flood the nations with grace and mercy;
send forth Your word Lord,
and let there be light!*

Lord, I come to your awesome presence,
from the shadows into Your radiance;
by Your blood I may enter Your brightness:
search me, try me, consume all my darkness
shine on me, shine on me.

Shine, Jesus, shine,....

As we gaze on Your kingly brightness
so our faces display Your likeness,
ever changing from glory to glory:
mirrored here, may our lives tell Your story
shine on me, shine on me.

Shine, Jesus, shine,....

Blessing

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
and also with you.

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