

St Nicholas Church, Sighthill

Christ the King Sunday

22nd November 2020

God is good, all the time

CALL TO WORSHIP

"All the members of our congregation may not be gathered in the same building, but at this time, when we need each other so much, we are invited to worship together, from where we are – knowing that God can hear us all and can blend even distant voices into one song of worship."

National Worship Team of the Church of Scotland

SONG: KING OF KINGS MAJESTY

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qs2uWU75Vmw>

OPENING PRAYER/ PRAYER OF APPROACH

Leader: Come, let us sing to the Lord;

All: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

Leader: Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving

All: let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!

Leader: For the Lord is a great God,

All: and a great King above all gods.

Leader: In His hand are the depths of the earth;

All: the heights of the mountains are His also.

Leader: The sea is His, for He made it,

All: and the dry land, which His hands have formed.

Leader: Come, let us worship and bow down,

All: let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

Leader: For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture,

All: and the sheep of His hand.

Leader: Come let us listen to his voice!

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Today we worship the Lord, our God with gladness and come into His presence with singing. He is God and He is good. He made us and we belong to Him. We are His people, the sheep of His pastures.

We enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise, giving thanks to Him, blessing His name. We give thanks to Him for His goodness, for His steadfast love which endures for ever, and His faithfulness to all generations. We also ask, in prayer, for forgiveness for the other "kings" that we kneel before like possessions, power, pride or privilege.

Loving Father, guide us to be Your servants. Lead us to trust in You as the only king we need – the only King we have – the only King that is worthy of worship. Direct our faith in Your sovereign power as we strive to follow Your Son, through the power of Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father which 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Matthew 6: 9-13 (NKJV)

SONG: 50 NATIONS SING AMAZING GRACE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BA7pdABvpnc>

BIBLE READING - EPHESIANS 1:15-23

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVGmUV6gQDs>

I have heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all of God's people. So I never stop being grateful for you, as I mention you in my prayers. I ask the glorious Father and God of our Lord Jesus Christ to give you his Spirit. The Spirit will make you wise and let you understand what it means to know God. My prayer is that light will flood your hearts and that you will understand the hope that was given to you when God chose you. Then you will discover the glorious blessings that will be yours together with all of God's people.

I want you to know about the great and mighty power that God has for us followers. It is the same wonderful power he used when he raised Christ from death and let him sit at his right side in heaven. There Christ rules over all forces, authorities, powers, and rulers. He rules over all beings in this world and will rule in the future world as well. God has put all things under the power of Christ, and for the good of the church he has made him the head of everything. The church is Christ's body and is filled with Christ who completely fills everything.

REFLECTION

Christ the King Sunday is the final Sunday in the Church's year. The feast of Christ the King was first marked in 1925, just a few years after the end of the First World War, in a time of rising totalitarianism. Pope Pius XI was deeply concerned about the state of the world; worried (as he said in the encyclical that established the feast) that "the majority of men had thrust Jesus Christ and His holy law out of their lives; that these had no place either in private affairs or in politics: and, that as long as individuals and states refused to submit to the rule of our Saviour, there would be no really hopeful prospect of a lasting peace among nations.

Christ the King was intended to assert the power of Christ in the world, over the power of war, over the power of totalitarianism. Pius XII rather warped this vision by signing concordats with Mussolini and Hitler a few years later, but the original prophetic vision is important. The bringing of the world into the order of God transcends political vision and political authority. But that does not mean that this is an otherworldly vision. Recognising Christ's kingship is also about responding to injustice and also about speaking out against the ways in which authority supports injustice.

Our God is just and cannot stand injustice in all its forms. Also, as our reading reminds us, Jesus Christ the Son of God who is seated at God's right hand, in the heavenly places, is far above all rule and authority and power and dominion. He is above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. He is the King of kings and Lord of all. All things are subject to Him. But He also wants thoughtful subjects and does not require blind obedience. This largely explains why He gives us "a spirit of wisdom and revelation." Also, this Christ – our King, is a King who loves us all equally. As I have said many times, we can do nothing to make our triune God love us any more or less than He loves us. He loves us all equally – men or women, tall or short, black or white, rich or poor, gay or straight, churched or unchurched. God loves us all and desires that no one perishes, but come to know Him, through Jesus Christ, and live life to the full in and through Him.

We are also reminded in our scripture reading that Jesus cares about how others are treated. He says elsewhere in the Bible (in Matthew 7:12), 'So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets'. We are all accountable to God and, as Dr Garrett Andrew - minister of Nipomo Community Presbyterian Church, California USA writes "He will one day bring forth something so completely new that this world of dividing walls; this world of the broken down and beat up will come to an end. He adds that 'although we look forward to that time, the Church [of Christ] is not a storage house

for those passing through this life while waiting for their pie in the sky. It is a place of those called by God for the greater good.'

In conclusion, recognising Christ's place at God's right hand is not a question of accepting things the way they are. When we receive His wisdom and revelation, we see this world differently, not only the world to come. As Andrew again writes, "Christ's place of authority in the created order is the foundation for all fights against injustice. Does our love for all the saints inspire others to thank God? Do we have the eyes of the heart that allow us to know the hope to which we have been called?" May the Spirit of God continue to challenge us all to consider how our faith permeates our lives and our actions, speaking to those around us of God's love for the world.

This an adaptation [which includes my own reflection] of Rev Prof Charlotte Methuen, Professor of Ecclesiastical History, University of Glasgow, Assistant Priest, St Margaret Newlands, SEC

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

We pray for the coming of God's kingdom. You sent Your Son to bring good news to the poor, sight to the blind, freedom to captives and salvation to Your people: anoint us with Your Spirit; rouse us to work in His name. Loving God, by Your Spirit, bring in Your kingdom.

Send us to bring help to the poor and freedom to the oppressed. Loving God, by Your Spirit, bring in Your kingdom. Send us to speak out and proclaim Your justice in the world. Loving God, by Your Spirit, bring in Your kingdom. Send us to tell the world the good news of Your healing love. Loving God, by Your Spirit in Your kingdom. Send us to those who mourn, to bring joy and gladness instead of grief.

Loving God, by Your Spirit, bring in Your kingdom. Send us to proclaim that the time is here for You to save Your people. Loving God, by Your Spirit, bring in Your kingdom. Lord of the Church, hear our prayer, and make us one in mind and heart to serve You. Amen

CLOSING SONG: JESUS is KING I WILL EXTOL HIM

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6WnLnaQUes>

FINAL BLESSINGS

May we go forth to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom. May we be always willing to teach, baptise and nurture new believers. May we in our daily lives respond to human need by loving service. May we have the courage to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation. May we join together to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.