

Call to worship (inspired by Psalm 132:8-9)

Let us gather together in the presence of our God.
Let us bring our songs of praise and our prayers of thanksgiving.
Let us bow down in worship before the Lord our Maker.

**Arise, O God, and enter Your sanctuary,
You, and the ark of Your strength.
Clothe us in justice and faithfulness,
and put new songs of joy and praise in our mouths.**
Let's worship God together!

Hymn Crown him with many crowns R&S 262

Crown Him with many crowns,
the Lamb upon His throne;
hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns
all music but its own!
Awake, my soul, and sing
of Him who died for thee,
and hail Him as thy matchless King
through all eternity.

Crown him the Lord of life,
who triumphed o'er the grace,
and rose victorious in the strife
for those he came to save:
his glories now we sing
who died and rose on high;
who died eternal life to bring,
and lives that death may die.

Crown him the Son of God,
before the worlds began:
and ye, who tread where he hat rod,
crown him the Son of Man;
who every grief hath known
that wrings the human breast,
and takes and bears them for his own,
that all in him may rest.

Crown Him the Lord of Love:
behold His hands and side;
rich wounds yet visible above
in beauty glorified.
All hail, Redeemer, hail!
For thou hast died for me:
Thy praise shall never, never fail
Throughout eternity.

Matthew Bridges

Introduction

Today is the Sunday before Advent, when we celebrate Christ the King.

What do you usually think of when you think of a King?...

Jesus was a completely different kind of King. King David, from whom Jesus was descended, was a shepherd. God refers to himself as Israel's shepherd. To shepherd, in God's world, is to sacrificially care for the vulnerable ones under your protection. That is the kind of king Jesus came to be, not the kind that is rich and has many servants and courtesans and lords it over the people, but the kind that serves and sacrifices for the people.

For our Advent candle lighting prayers this year we are using material from the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) – Churches Working together for Peace, which is the URC, Methodist and Baptist churches. There is a different focus and symbol each week, represented here on the banners:

1. The globe, our planet represents hope and a renewing of the environment.
2. The dove represents actively working for peace.
3. The piggy-bank represents working for a just economy for all.
4. The woman and child represents the marginalised, like Mary, Joseph and Jesus brought to the centre.

Opening Prayer

Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?"

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king.

For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.

Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." (John 18:37)

Loving God of power and justice and peace,

In our broken world we seek a new order

Where there is courage to speak truth to power, we seek a new order

Where there is mutual support in church and community, we seek a new order

Where there is abundant time for healing, we seek a new order

where there will be peace and freedom for all. **Amen**

www.christianaid.org.uk/

Confession and Assurance of Pardon

If we say we are without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins.

Let us confess our sins together and seek God's forgiveness:

**Holy God, we confess before you that we have not loved you with our whole being;
we have not loved our neighbour as ourselves.**

**In your infinite mercy, forgive us when we turn from you,
release us from the burdens of our past,
and remake us in your image and likeness
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

Jesus said, 'your sins are forgiven.' Thanks be to God.

Gifts

Holy One, all that we have comes from you. Accept our gifts for your work in the world,
and to you be the glory and praise always. **Amen**

**Bible readings: 2 Samuel 23:1-7
 John 18:33-37**

What kind of king was Jesus? Jesus was a very different kind of king to the kings of his day – we might think of King Herod, who we know was so afraid of a new king being born, who might take his place that he ordered the killing of all male children under two, a massacre from which Jesus and his parents had to flee. Those of you who know your Old Testament can probably think of other examples of bad kings. Even David, who was held up as the best of the Jewish kings, was an adulterer who had his mistress's husband killed so he would not be found out. And Jesus is certainly a very different leader to the kind of kings, presidents, and prime ministers we have in today's world – the kind who have to defend themselves of accusations of sleaze and corruption and don't even wear a mask when visiting hospitals.

A king, in this passage from John's Gospel, is the one who exercises ultimate authority. This was the view in Biblical times and it is still the view now, in our world, in a society where success is associated with winning at all costs, as we saw at the COP26 climate conference.

In this passage, Jesus speaks to the most powerful person of the day – Pilate – the only man who had the power to save his life. Pilate doesn't like it when he can't control things. He doesn't like it that Jesus answers back. He is trying to shift the blame from himself to the Jews, Jesus' own people who have handed him over. The powerful elites of Jesus' day were accustomed to controlling the conversations and discussions, in controlling everything, just as the powerful elites today are accustomed to controlling the discussions – telling lies, and having one rule for them and another for everyone else. Does Jesus respond to Pilate with "authority" or does he respond with honesty based on his experience as a marginalized individual? Jesus asked Pilate the question: Are you asking me sincerely or are you prejudiced because of what other people have told you? Jesus called out Pilate for his feigned neutrality. Pilate's question is one that he was asking for others – on behalf of the High Priest who had had Jesus arrested.

Jesus tells Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world!" This has often been interpreted to mean that Jesus' kingdom is somewhere in heaven and not relevant to this world, but Jesus is saying that the values of his kingdom are different from those of the current system. In other words, Jesus does not have to exercise the type of authority that seeks to be on top, which results in oppression, corruption of the judicial system, and precisely the kind of hypocrisy that Pilate exhibited in this interaction with Jesus. Jesus tells him: "If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." The values of Jesus and his kingdom are so vastly different from those of this world that often we fail to understand them. The church, which should represent Jesus' kingdom, is here to serve in humility rather than to seek earthly power. Jesus is the king, yet he does not arrive in a chariot, but on a donkey! Jesus is the king who is born in a borrowed space among the animals, even if he is later visited by Wise Men and his birth scares the reigning king Herod into committing a massacre. Jesus, the king was born as a poor human baby, vulnerable and weak. Jesus is a king who is killed by those with power, not a king who is victorious over his enemies by defeating them in war. However, in allowing himself to be killed and physically defeated for the sake of truth, he engages in the ultimate demonstration of the power of love. It is through his humility and sacrifice that he is victorious. This Advent and beyond, let us remember what kind of king Jesus was and is, and try to emulate that life of service and humility.

Hymn Jesus shall reign R&S 269 (words on next page)

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
does his successive journeys run;
his Kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more

For Him shall endless prayer be made.
and praises throng to crown his head,
his name like sweet perfume shall rise
with every morning sacrifice.

People and realms of every tongue
dwell on his love with sweetest song;
and infant voices shall proclaim
their early blessings on his name.

Blessings abound where'er he reigns:
the prisoners leap to lose their chains,
the weary find eternal rest,
and all who suffer want are blest.

Let every creature rise and bring
peculiar honours to our King;
angels descend with songs again,
and earth repeat the loud Amen.

para. Isaac Watts

Lord's Supper

We remember, as we do at every communion service, the gift of the life and death of God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Come to this table, you who are beloved in Christ. Come, not because you must, but because you may.

The Lord be with you.

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 our thanks and praise.

Loving God, the world you made is beautiful and full of wonder.
You made us, with all your creatures, and you love all that you have made.
You gave us the words of your prophets, the stories of your people throughout the generations,
and the gathered wisdom of many years.
You gave us Jesus, your Son, to be born and to grow up
in difficult times where there was little peace.
He embraced people with your love and told stories to change us all.
He healed those in pain and brought to life those who had lost hope.
He made friends with anyone who would listen and loved even his enemies.
For these things, he suffered. For these things, he died.
And he was raised from death and lives with you forever.
You give us your Holy Spirit, to teach and to strengthen us,
to remind us of Jesus Christ and to make us one in him.
For all these gifts we thank you, and join with all your people
on earth and in heaven, in joyful praise, saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Send your Holy Spirit upon this bread and wine,
and upon your people, that Christ may be with us,
and we may be ready to live for you
and do what you ask of us, today and every day to come. **Amen**

Christ Church, 21 Nov. 2021 – Christ the King. Written service circulated to all

On the night when he was betrayed, Jesus took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body which is broken for you. Do this is remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Sharing of bread and wine

Prayer after communion

Most gracious God, we thank you for what you have given us.
You have fed us with the bread of life and renewed us for your service.
Now we give ourselves to you, and ask that our daily living
may be part of the life of your kingdom,
and that our love may be your love
reaching out into the life of the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Prayers of intercession

URC Prayer Handbook p67 (inspired by 2 Samuel 23:1-7)

At the end of Interfaith week, we pray for peace and harmony among the different faiths.
We pray for our communities where different traditions shape different outlooks on things. Lord, help your people to listen well to each other that we may learn to live together knowing that though different we are your family in Christ.

We pray for the people of Liverpool and all those affected by the bomb attack there, giving thanks that there was only one loss of life.
We pray for the refugees forced to cross the Channel in small boats; for their families who have lost loved ones, and for the refugees stuck in the political battle on the Polish border.

In the silence we bring to mind all those known to us who are ill, those in hospital, those receiving treatment or waiting for test results, and those who mourn...
Wrap them in your love and grace and grant them peace. And we bring all these prayers together in the prayer Jesus taught us: **Our Father.....**

Amen

Hymn Make way, make way R&S 141

Make way, make way for Christ the King
in splendour arrives
fling wide the gates and welcome him
into your lives

*Make way! Make way
For the King of kings, King of kings!
Make way! Make way!
And let His kingdom in*

He comes the broken hearts to heal
the prisoners to free
the deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance
The blind shall see.

Make way! Make way

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And those who mourn with heavy hearts
who weep and sigh,
with laughter, joy and royal crown
he'll beautify.

Make way! Make way

We call you now to worship him
as Lord of all
to have no other gods but him;
their thrones must fall.

Graham Kendrick

Blessing

Go out into the world to make a difference. Go out to be the light of Christ the King in the darkness of poverty, oppression and injustice. Go out with a loving heart and an open mind. And may the grace of God the Creator, the love of Christ the Redeemer, and the peace of the Holy Spirit our Sustainer be with us now and remain with us always. Amen

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