

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



24 NOVEMBER 2024

CHRIST THE KING



WORSHIP AT HOME

This time is an opportunity to be still, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within.

Set aside a time for this practice; prepare yourself, as you might for a usual Sunday morning and remember that there are others from the congregation gathering at the same time as you. There are also many from the church around the globe who are gathering to seek the presence of God as we are. We join with them all.

Prepare a space in the house; find a comfortable chair, light a candle, turn off distracting noises and close the door if that will help you to be still. This is something that does not need to be hurried.

GREETING:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all

And also with you

CALL TO WORSHIP:

We have chosen to be here, where God remembers us.

God comes to us, the One who was and is and is to come.

Like leaves skipping over the carpet of grass:

God comes to us, the One who was and is and is to come.

Like the first glimpses of the sun peeking over the horizon:

God comes to us, the One who was and is and is to come.

Like the moon lighting our way on a cloudless, autumn night:

God comes to us, the One who was and is and is to come.

(c) Thom Schuman

HYMN TIS 133: O Worship the King

PRAYERS OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION:

Let us pray
Almighty God:
from the beginning of time
to the end of eternity,
you have chosen
to use your power and majesty
to love us,
to redeem us,
to shape us as your people.

King of Kings
and Lord of Lords:
you became weak
so you could confront
the strength of sin and death,
confounding their ridicule
with your resurrection.

Spirit of God,
resting upon us:
may your power enflame us
with your peace;
may your peace touch us

with your grace;
may your grace fill us
with your hope;
may your hope lead us
into your Kingdom.
We pray in the name of Jesus, the King.

AMEN

CALL TO RECONCILIATION

While there are many with power in our world - power to hurt us, power to hire or fire us, power to control us - only God has the power to forgive us and make us new people. Let us confess how we fear the power of the world, and welcome the power of God's grace.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION *(together)*

The choices we make, Mighty God, reveal who we are.

Choosing the lies of the world, your Word has not been on our lips.

Choosing independent and isolated lives, we do not reflect your Spirit in our actions towards others.

Choosing to exalt the powerful of our day, we are unable to follow the One whose weakness gives us life.

Forgive us, God who became weak for our sake.

Do not turn your face from us, but help us to face ourselves honestly.

Free us from our captivity, so we may faithfully follow Jesus Christ, our King, our Lord, our Savior.

Silence is kept

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Shout for joy, children of God! The God who was and is and is to come, loves you, forgives you, and renews you.

God's Spirit rests upon us, grace and peace are the gifts of our loving God. Amen.

(c) Thom Schuman

THE PEACE:

The Peace of the Lord be always with you

And also with you

We share the PEACE

HYMN TiS 207: Jesus shall Reign (v 1, 3, 5 and 6)

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD: Read by Lorraine Denniston

Your Word, Oh Lord, is a lamp to our feet;

A light to our path

2 SAMUEL 23:1-7

Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, son of Jesse, the oracle of the man whom God exalted, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the favourite of the Strong One of Israel: ²The spirit of the Lord speaks through me, his word is upon my tongue. ³The God of Israel has spoken, the Rock of Israel has said to me: One who rules over people justly, ruling in the fear of God, ⁴is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land. ⁵Is not my house like this with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. Will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire? ⁶But the godless are all like thorns that are thrown away; for they cannot be picked up with the hand; ⁷to touch them one uses an iron bar or the shaft of a spear. And they are entirely consumed in fire on the spot.

PSALM 132

¹O Lord, remember in David's favour all the hardships he endured;

²**how he swore to the Lord and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob,**

³"I will not enter my house or get into my bed;

⁴**I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids,**

⁵until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."

⁶**We heard of it in Ephrathah; we found it in the fields of Jaar.**

⁷**"Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool."**

⁸Rise up, O Lord, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might.

⁹**Let your priests be clothed with righteousness, and let your faithful shout for joy.**

¹⁰For your servant David's sake do not turn away the face of your anointed one.

¹¹**The Lord swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: "One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne.**

¹²If your sons keep my covenant and my decrees that I shall teach them, their sons also, forevermore, shall sit on your throne."

¹³**For the Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation:**

¹⁴"This is my resting place forever; here I will reside, for I have desired it.

¹⁵**I will abundantly bless its provisions; I will satisfy its poor with bread.**

¹⁶Its priests I will clothe with salvation, and its faithful will shout for joy.

¹⁷**There I will cause a horn to sprout up for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed one.**

¹⁸His enemies I will clothe with disgrace, but on him, his crown will gleam."

REVELATION 1:4-8

⁴John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen. ⁸"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

JOHN 18:33-37

³³Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" ³⁴Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" ³⁵Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" ³⁶Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." ³⁷Pilate 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."

The gospel of the Lord

Praise to you. Lord Jesus Christ

HYMN TiS 216: Rejoice the Lord is King (v 1, 3 and 5)

SERMON: Chasing a LIE or Living the TRUTH?

Today is Christ the King, the culminating week of the Christian Year for Year B in the Lectionary. Next week is the beginning of the liturgical Year – Year ‘C’ in the Lectionary and our first week in Year C is ADVENT 1.

Let me explain what is meant by celebrating Jesus as King.

I’m not sure this is entirely correct or theological sound but here goes anyway.

We celebrate Christ as King because ‘King’ is to be understood as the culmination of all that Jesus was. Now he rules overall and over all. But not as the world rules. Finally, and for ever he establishes the rule and reign of God over all. Not with subjection and force and brutality, as is the way of rulers on earth. His Kingdom is established through powerlessness, vulnerability and dying and by God’s own love and resurrection grace. That is the real KINGLY Way, Truth and Life – that is the way of Jesus: Lord, Master and King of all. Not by conquering all and eradicating those who oppose. His Kingdom is built on the Creator of all and the Love of all and the Peace of all and the Hope of all and the Truth of all – God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

And next week we start the cycle again as part of our adoration of the King and as part of our growth and sustenance of faith.

But to understand KING properly we need to have a different perspective from today’s modern understanding. Today KING or QUEEN is largely titular. No power, or rather no political power is attached to the KINGS or QUEENS of the 21st Century (today their ‘power’ is vastly reduced and much more subtle - but definitely not political – that power rests with Government.)

On the other hand, in Jesus’ day KINGS were very powerful, a KING held a position of complete political and military power. A KING back then was normally a military commander with many resources and soldiers at his command which enabled him to impose his will upon the people whom he ruled.

There are some interesting KINGS or LEADERS or RULERS referred to in the readings today.

The great King David (the forbear of Jesus) is featured in both the Hebrew Scripture readings. Even though he was a very flawed King, David was devoted to the way of God. In the Samuel reading he expresses his irresistible desire to establish a temple that is appropriate as a place to revere God. And in the Psalm King David says

⁴I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids,

⁵until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.”

⁷“Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool.”

The other King referred to in our readings was not a KING in name, but one in fact. He was a ruler in the Roman Empire. His name: Pilate. He was very powerful and had the military ‘clout’ to back up any decision he made. And the encounter between him and Jesus is instructive in understanding how we might understand what Kingship means for us now. The difference between human rulership and God’s Reign is starkly shown, as Jesus explains that he claims no human kingship, but is the king of a realm that is not of this world. It is a kingdom of truth and justice. And note the words here, ‘a realm that is not of this world,’ do not mean the Kingdom of God is another world completely separate from this one! NO! God’s Kingship means Justice and love and peace and unity and hope and TRUTH ON EARTH!

So how do today's Political Kings rate?

Trump / Putin / Netanyahu / Xi Jinping / Kim Jong Un / Albanese etc – in a word: BADLY!!! – and one of that lot hasn't even started yet!

A comment from the AGE: 'AND ANOTHER THING...' LETTER to the AGE – Thursday Nov 14th 2024 (pg 25) - Les Alsen, Elsternwick

'It would seem that our choice for political leaders is no longer between good and better, but rather between bad and worse.'

Where do I start!!!! It seems to me they are more interested in who has got the biggest rockets and greatest power and they disregard peoples' lives, particularly those who are not in their own 'tribe' or they are weak and ineffectual in standing up to the World's big boys. Over generalisation? Maybe but it is fair to say that their ruling is often based on fear, division, contempt towards and power over others, self-aggrandisement and often dishonesty and disregard for the truth and rights of others.

Are these the sort of Rulers or Kings who reflect authentically the Way, The Truth and the Life of the King of Heaven and Earth!?!? I'll let you be the judge of that AND mull on what that might mean about our world views, and what we do about that, and how we vote in regard to the kinds of KINGS/RULERS we need to rule over us!

Let me share with you some of the marks of the followers of the King of Kings

First, the glory of God is revealed not in conquest or power-over, but in sacrifice and service. God's Reign is not "of this world" – it is a completely different reality that exists within, and subverts, the power systems of this world, our world, God's world. Therefore, in our quest for justice, we must be careful not to get drawn into competitive power games in which only some can win, while others lose. Rather, we need to constantly hold ourselves faithful to the service and sacrifice of Christ, to the welcome and inclusivity of Christ, and to the love of Christ for all – even for our enemies.

Secondly, to know and live the truth. We are surrounded now by lies from political leader/kings and on social media there too many blatant fibs. Lies which means LEADERS push side any laws that stop them just having whatever they want and getting away with whatever they want.

Pilate in his encounter with Jesus wants to genuinely know what is truth because for him truth has always equalled expediency – that is, his decision to throw Jesus to the wolves is expedient. Pilate views humankind as alone in the universe with nothing but its own courage and ingenuity to see it through. When Pilate is confronted by Jesus' assertion, the assertion asks a genuine question about the nature of truth from deep within Pilate, "What is truth?" For years there have been politicians, scientists, theologians, philosophers, poets, and so on to tell him, and all their answers have been hollow.

But Jesus doesn't answer Pilate's question. He just stands there. Stands, and stands there. I imagine looking into Pilate's inner most being. He stands there – just stands there – stands.

Frederick Buecher says:

'Jesus answers him with a silence that is overwhelming in its eloquence. In case there should be any question as to what that silence meant, on another occasion Jesus put it into words for his disciple Thomas. "I," he said, "I am the truth" (14:6).

Jesus did not say that religion was the truth, or that his own teachings were the truth, or that what people taught about him was the truth, or that the Bible was the truth, or the church, or any system of ethics or theological doctrine.'

NO! "I am the truth" (14:6)."

For Pilate, the truth stood there in front of him. I think he knew that. I think he knew this one was who he said he was – King indeed, Truth indeed - but he lacked the Political/Kingly will to listen to his inner being and threw this problematic King to the wolves – out of his own jurisdiction and conscience.

Let me conclude with a brief quote from Texts for Preaching

'Truth is always threatening, and particularly so when the one in our midst is the way, the truth, and the life (14:6). His very presence calls into question the many erroneous perceptions on which our worlds are constructed. At the same time, he is the Life-giver, and he gives it abundantly.' Texts for Preaching Christ the King Year B

Let us pray

Lord, as servants of the King of Kings equip us to serve our families, churches, communities and the world in your ways of love, justice, peace and truth. And may Christ the King shape us as his subjects in all that we think do and hope. We pray in the King's name
Amen

HYMN TIS 323: Mary's Child

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE: Prepared by Di Richter

"As we prepare for our prayers for others, we light this candle to remember all those who are part of our church community but who are not at worship with us today."

Light the candle.

As we focus today on Christ the King, you are encouraged to have a short time of silence between each paragraph for reflection and personal prayer.

Let us pray:

Jesus Christ, redeemer of the world, we pray for a future where everyone gets a fair go, where truth is understood and shared and justice and righteousness flow around us like an ever-flowing stream.

Jesus Christ, everlasting ruler of the world, guide nations and rulers in the ways of justice, truth and co-operation so that people everywhere may enjoy peace and prosperity.

Jesus Christ, our lover and liberator, bring release to those enslaved by poverty or oppression so that all may experience dignity and freedom.

Jesus Christ, Son of David, guide the leaders of our world that they may recognize truth and use their power wisely and with integrity so that people everywhere may benefit from fair and honest government.

Jesus Christ, witness and truth-teller, make your voice heard to all who dwell in falsehood so that people everywhere may live in righteousness and truth and contribute to sharing God's love in the community and world around us.

Jesus Christ, hope of all the world, console the sorrowing and relieve the suffering so that your people everywhere may know your comfort and your balm.

Jesus Christ, true ruler of earth and heaven, we give you thanks and praise for your servants of every age, tribe and nation. May we serve and praise you also.

These things we ask in your name,

Amen.

Prayers prepared from resources by Janet Nelson and Bruce Prewer.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray together, saying:

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 and forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil, for the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,

now and forever. Amen

HYMN TiS 315: Mine Eyes have seen (v 1, 3 and 4)

DISMISSAL:

Let us go forth to serve God's children in weakness,

so others might find the strength to live.

Let us go forth as powerless as Jesus,

to empower others with hope.

Let us go forth with our arms full of the Spirit's peace,

so the world might be healed of all its brokenness.

(c) Thom M. Shuman

BLESSING:

The love of God enfold you,

the wisdom of Christ enlighten you,

the fire of the Spirit enflame you;

and may the blessing of the holy triune God, Father, Son and Spirit,

rest upon and abide with you,

now and evermore

Amen

WORD OF MISSION:

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen

RECESSIONAL HYMN TiS 779: May the feet of God.

May the feet of God walk with you, and his hand hold you tight.

May the eye of God rest on you, and his ear hear your cry.

May the smile of God be for you, and his breath give you life.

May the Child of God grow in you, and his love bring you home.

Postlude

You can find a copy of today's sermon along with other congregational information on the church website.

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Presider: Rev Ron Townsend

Music: Peter Hurley

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Tuesdays, 9.30am-2.30pm

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NEWS & NOTICES