

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 24 November 2024 - Christ the King

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Daniel 7.9-10 and 13-14; Psalm 93; Revelation 1. 4b-8; John 18.33-37

Homily

Today's homily has been written by the Revd Sarah Tan, Chaplain, HMP Littlehey

Today is the feast of Christ the King. The end of the year in the church before we turn next Sunday to Advent and the beginning of our preparations for Christmas. We think today about Jesus coming at the end of time as judge and ruler of his kingdom – a king. Yes, a king, but not as the world would know one.

We aren't talking about a king in a political sense – Jesus is not like a Prime Minister or President, nor a Dictator. Jesus isn't a king in the sense of our King Charles either, we are not talking about a kingdom which is geographical or temporal. We are talking about a kingdom of love. A kingdom that holds in its span as the book of Revelation tells us the beginning and the end. All that ever has been and all that ever will be is within God's kingdom.

As humans we can't really begin to understand that and nor should we be able to, since we are not God. God is other, God is not human but divine. In Jesus God became fully human to show us how to be people of God's kingdom. It led of course to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus' life for us to have the doors of the kingdom opened, the gates flung wide and for us all to be allowed in.

Our gospel reading today talks about truth. I think truth is a lot about intention and integrity. Truth is rarely as simple as what is right or wrong. It is more complex than that. Truth is about something deep and profound it involves understanding and sensitivity and it involves your gut. We all have gut reactions to places or people or situations. They aren't always rational or easy to understand but they do tell us something. When we are seeking for truth, for the right thing to do we need to stop and think and give ourselves some time to reflect on what our gut instinct is telling us. We need to think why we might feel how we do so that we don't just respond, or act based on how we are feeling with a knee jerk, ill-considered response but from a place of truth. Using our gut instinct to guide us but not allowing it to rule or consume us is an important part of discerning the truth of a situation for ourselves. I think that is the kind of truth Jesus is talking about when he says in the gospel today that 'everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.'

Our gut instincts can be strong and powerful. They can be overwhelming especially if our gut reaction is one that means we are fearful or sad or anxious. Equally, we can be carried away by elation and joy. If we act purely on gut instinct and without thought or prayer, we can cause harm to others and to ourselves. In some ways the stronger the gut instinct the longer the pause needs to be before you act to give yourself the space to hear God's voice in the midst of the storm of emotions that can feel overwhelming. God is there in the midst of the storm, God is there to still us, to ground us, to bring us the peace and love which God alone can give. We just need to make the space for God to speak to us especially when emotions are running high. We need to make space for God to reveal the truth to us.

I'm sure we can all think of a time when we have had a decision to make. Might be something big or fairly mundane but a time where there has been a dilemma, when there is no obviously right answer. That's when we rely on our gut instinct to guide us to help us to make a decision. How we use our time, our talents, our money are all decisions we make every day. In a world where there are so many things competing for everything that we might have to give it can be overwhelming to decide what to do or how to act. That's when we rely on our gut instinct to guide us, when we most need to seek the wisdom of God through prayer or stillness to listen for the voice of God for guidance. Our gut instinct when centred on God is a moral compass for each of us, a means of seeking the truth that is intentional and has integrity. It is what guides us to put others before ourselves – to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves. It taps into the deep love God has for each of us and for the whole world, it is what guides us when we need to care for ourselves in order to be able to care for others and when we need to do the work God puts before us knowing that we can only do that with God's love and strength – grounded in God's truth.

The spirit of God speaks to us. The voice of God is not silent. It might not be foghorn loud, but it is certainly not silent. We may have to still ourselves, step out of our busy lives to hear what God is saying to each of us individually and as a church but there is always something to be listening for. What we hear when God speaks in the Gospels and today is the voice of love. A deep, profound, boundless love. Not an easy love, not a wholly understandable love but the deep truth of love which God alone can give.

The knowledge that we live as people who are loved and valued who are part of God's kingdom can't help but transform how we live. We can be free to be people who turn the other cheek, who share what we have willingly with others, who put others before ourselves and allow others to help us when we need it. We are expected to live as people who belong in God's kingdom, people rooted in the truth, people who know our need of God and also our need to serve God by serving others throughout our lives. We also know that however overwhelmed we can feel, however powerless in the face of world events or things closer to home that we can't control, God is with us in that too since nothing is impossible with God.

Jesus is a King, a king of a kingdom where all are welcome, where death has been defeated where there is no need for fear or sorrow anymore. Jesus is king of a kingdom that knows no bounds of space or time and a kingdom where all we are required to do is to love – to love God and to love our neighbour. Living that out is rarely straightforward but like all real truth it is worth working for and that is the calling of all of us who are kingdom people.

Amen.

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how _____ felt or I wonder how _____ felt when _____ happened?
- I wonder how you feel about _____?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what the [tree, pearl, coin] could really be?
- I wonder why _____ said _____?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

God of love we pray for your church here in this place, this diocese and throughout the world. We pray that the church would be a place of welcome and hope for all. A place where all can encounter your love and know they are included in your kingdom
Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

God of love we pray for your world. We pray for the leaders of the nations for kings, queens, presidents and political leaders. We pray for peace and justice throughout the world and that you would teach us how to be good stewards of your bountiful creation.
Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

God of love we pray for those who are sick and suffering and those who care for them. We pray for all those who will spend today in a hospital or hospice, those who are housebound and those whose daily roll as carers is not seen. We pray for healing for those who are sick in body mind or spirit and patience and compassion for those who are called to care for them.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

God of love we pray for those who have died and those who mourn. We pray for those who have died recently and those whose anniversary falls at this time. We give you thanks that you welcome us into your kingdom, and we trust that those we mourn are now dwelling safely with you. Comfort and protect those who mourn with the sense of your presence very near them.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

God of love we pray for ourselves and for one another. We bring to you in a moment of quiet those things which are on our hearts today trusting that you are always more willing than we are to pray.

(silence)

Merciful father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Suggested hymns/songs

Angel voices ever singing

Immortal Invisible

The kingdom of God is justice and joy

Lord enthroned in heavenly splendour

God is love his the care

Come let us join our cheerful songs

Seek ye first the kingdom of God

Lo he comes with clouds descending

Make me a channel of your peace

Crown him with many crowns

Activities to accompany the service:

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.org/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material

- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@ lectionary resource)