

WORSHIP AT HOME FOR 21ST NOVEMBER 2021 – CHRIST THE KING

So here we are at the end of another worship year as we think of Christ the King. Next week we shall be in Advent and preparing ourselves for the coming of Christ. Another year passed – and so many things have changed for us all whether in our churches or in our own lives. Whatever the changes always remember that you are not alone for Christ is always with you and your fellow Christians hold you in their prayers. As always, every blessing. *Margaret.*

Call to worship: Our King rides a cross and forgives those who wrong him. We come before Jesus, our loving King, and we bring to him our loving and thankful worship. **Amen.**

The words to ‘How sweet the name of Jesus sounds’ written by John Newton [1725-1807] StF 321

1 How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer’s ear!

It soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds and drives away our fears.

2 It makes the wounded spirit whole, and calms the troubled breast;
‘tis manna to the hungry soul, and to the weary, rest.

3 Dear name – the rock on which I build my shield and hiding-place;
Thy never-failing treasury, filled with boundless stores of grace!

4 Jesus! My Shepherd, Brother, Friend, my Prophet, Priest and King,
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End, accept the praise I bring.

5 Weak is the effort of my hearts and cold my warmest thought;
But when I see thee as thou art, I’ll praise thee as I ought.

6 Till then I would thy love proclaim with every fleeting breath;
And may the music of thy name refresh my soul in death.

Prayers:

Lord, we praise you that though you are always beyond us, you are never out of reach.

You are greater than we can ever imagine, but we can call you Father.

Your sovereign power and your eternal glory make us feel small and inadequate – but you have chosen to live in the hearts and lives of those who love you.

We praise you for the limitless love that you have towards all your creation.

It was out of love that you created.

It was because you are love that we were made.

You created us to live in a loving, caring relationship with you.

We praise you that even when we did not respond to your love but used our free will to live life our own way, you did not reject us.

In Christ you reached down to lift us up and to restore us and our fellowship with you.

Through Christ you have provided an opportunity for us to begin again – to be filled with hope and to be at peace in our relationship with you.

We thank you for the new freedom Christ has brought to our lives and for the assurance that our past mistakes have been forgiven and forgotten – that today is your gift to us and the future is safe in your hands.

Lord, thank you for opening your kingdom and allowing us to enter – and for promising that through your Holy Spirit you will enable us to live as free citizens now, and that we shall share in the celebration in the heavens of your love for all eternity.

May your love go on transforming who and what we are, that we may live for your praise and glory. In the name of Christ the King we pray. **Amen.**

Our Father who 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Psalm 46:

God is our refuge and strength; a tested help in times of trouble. And so we need not fear even if the world blows up, and the mountains crumble into the sea. Let the oceans roar and foam,; let the mountains tremble!

There is a river of joy flowing through the city of our God – the sacred home of the God above all gods. God himself is living in that City; therefore it stands unmoved despite the turmoil everywhere. He will not delay his help. The nations rant and rave in anger – but when God speaks, the earth melts in submission and kingdoms totter into ruin.

The Commander of the armies of heaven is here among us. He, the God of Jacob, has come to rescue us. Come, see the glorious things that our God does – how he brings ruin upon the world, and causes wars to end throughout the earth, breaking and burning every weapon.

Stand silent! Know that I am God! I will be honoured by every nation in the world!

The Commander of the heavenly armies is here among us. He, the God of Jacob, has come to rescue *us!*

Jeremiah 23: 1-6.

The Lord declares: 'I will send disaster on the leaders of my people – the shepherds of my sheep – for they have destroyed and scattered the very ones they were to care for. Instead of leading my flock to safety, you have deserted them and driven them to destruction. And now I will pour out judgement upon you for the evil you have done to them. And I will gather together the remnants of my flock from wherever I have sent them, and bring them back into their own fold, and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will appoint responsible shepherds to care for them, and they shall not need to be afraid again; all of them shall be accounted for continually.

For the time is coming, says the Lord, when I will place a righteous Branch upon King David's throne. He shall be a King who shall rule with wisdom and justice and cause righteousness to prevail everywhere throughout the earth.

And this is his name: '*The Lord our Righteousness*'. At that time Judah shall be saved and Israel live in peace.'

Comment: here is a wonderful image of God gathering up all the scattered sheep from where they have bolted in fear and confusion – and bringing them carefully back to their pasture. Good shepherds are appointed to tend them so that they will not be afraid anymore. This idea of a Shepherd King touches a deep chord in us; there is a rightness, a balance – a wholesome combination of authority and practical caring which rings true. There is safety and security in this. The tradition of shepherd kings is already in people's minds for David had been a shepherd boy made king – now it has an even more powerful meaning.

Today we look back at God's unfolding plan – we look at his redeeming love – and we see how the journey which began all those hundreds of years before brings us firmly to the cross – the cross which firms and anchors everything.

From the cross we can look backward through time to the gradual unfolding of the story – and we can look forward to a deepening understanding as we approach Christmas and Advent once again.

The words to 'Jesus comes with all his grace' written by Charles Wesley [1707-1788] StF 326

1 Jesus comes with all his grace, comes to save a fallen race;

Object of our glorious hope, Jesus comes to lift us up.

Alleluia!

2 Let the living stones cry out; let the seed of Abram shout;

Praise we all our lowly King, give him thanks, rejoice and sing.

Alleluia!

3 He has our salvation wrought, he our captive souls has bought,

He has reconciled to God, he has washed us in his blood.

Alleluia!

4 We are now his lawful right, walk as children of the light;

We shall soon obtain the grace, pure in heart, to see his face.

Alleluia!

5 We shall gain our calling's prize; after God we all shall rise,

Filled with joy, and love, and peace, perfected in holiness.

Alleluia!

Paul's Letter to the Colossians 1: 11-20:

We are praying that you will be filled with his mighty, glorious strength so that you can keep going no matter what happens – always full of the joy of the Lord, and always thankful to the Father who has made us fit to share all the wonderful things that belong to those who live in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us out of the darkness and gloom of Satan's kingdom and brought us into the kingdom of his dear Son, who bought our freedom with his blood and forgave us all our sins.

Christ is the exact likeness of the unseen God. He existed before God made anything at all, and, in fact, Christ himself is the Creator who made everything in heaven and earth – the things we can see and the things we can't; the spirit world with its kings and kingdoms, the rulers and authorities – all were made by Christ for his own use and glory. He was before all else began and it is his power that holds everything together. He is the Head of the body made up of his people – that is, his church – which he began, and he is the Leader of all those who arise from the dead, so that he is first in everything, for God wanted all of himself to be in his Son.

It was through what his Son did that God cleared a path for everything to come to him – all things in heaven and earth – for Christ's death on the cross has made peace with God for all by his blood.

You might also like to read the Gospel set for today – Luke 23: 33-43

Comment: From our readings we might make the fairly standard point that Christ's kingship and authority are a challenge to most human understanding. We humans are fickle and hard to lead and inspire because

we have no real understanding of our deepest needs and desires. We just know that they are not being fulfilled if we depend on our own machinations.

So Jeremiah pictured a people who were now fragmented due to dodgy leadership. They have ended up pulling in different directions. Rather like our own culture! These people have lost any real sense of who they are - certainly they no longer remember they are God's people and that they belong together. However, God is going to rid them of their bad leaders and put faithful 'shepherds' in place. Eventually the people should be ready for the coming of the Messiah. Just then, in Jeremiah's time, they would not have understood 'justice and righteousness' – but the time should come.

The Colossians, however, had reached the happy time when they could recognise the rule of God. They had even made the next step and recognised the connection between 'their shepherd' and God. They understand that Jesus had taken them out of confusion and darkness, and from submittance to false leaders, into the Kingdom of God – a place of freedom and forgiveness. They had come to realise that Jesus could do this because he was the full reflection of God's own loving and reconciling Kingship.

Jeremiah looked at a time in the future when his people would be rescued – the Colossians know that they have already been rescued.

When Jesus was hanging on the cross he was between two thieves, one of whom instinctively knew what Jeremiah's people had to relearn. He had a sense of God's justice, recognising his own guilt and Jesus' innocence. It was his ability to see God's rule of righteousness and justice – and his recognition of God hanging there beside him – which fitted him for the kingdom.

We too need to learn to do the same – and to long for God's kingdom. The Colossians had the key – look for Jesus Christ's likeness day by day till we always recognise it and love it.

Prayers:

As citizens of the Kingdom, let us pray:

Living God, we thank you for all have done for us in Christ. You have given a new dimension in our lives – a hope and purpose out of this world – a taste of eternal life with all the fulfilment that offers and resources to meet any challenges we might face.

We praise you that through faith we are able to glimpse things as yet unseen – that we are part of the great company of your people in heaven and on earth – that we are pilgrims together in a journey of discovery – that we are in Christ, our King.

We thank you also that you have given us life in this world and that you have called us to serve you in a particular place and time. We thank you that we have been called to serve you as we have moved from place to place – and that we are Christians living now in this place.

We thank you for all our area has to offer and for all the ways we are a part of it and the people who live here. Help us to work out our faith in this place, Lord, offering service to community in which we are set, making the Gospel real in our activities, our relationships and our attitudes.

Living God, help us to anticipate your kingdom but help us also to keep our feet on the ground, remembering that your kingdom actually begins here and now, wherever we are, - it isn't at some distant point in the future. Your kingdom is on earth and not simply in heaven – here in our area as much as anywhere.

Lord of life, hear our prayer.

Help us truly to be in Christ wherever we are to the glory of your name. **Amen.**

Illustration [David Adam]:

In science fiction films there is often a scene where the earth or spaceship is hurtling towards disaster. No human could possibly save it. Obviously, they try everything they can but they just get more exhausted. Some lose hope altogether.

Then a mysterious being enters the story – someone or something from beyond our world. He or she has powers beyond our wildest dreams and can change destruction and disaster into peace, calm and order. The world is restored, the being thanked then gone from sight.

This is a salvation story and, although fiction, understands something of our need for salvation. It knows we have no power ourselves to help ourselves. It tells of the love from a being far greater and more powerful than we are and of our salvation.

There is such a story, of course, in the Gospels and that is certainly not fiction. It is the greatest love story and rescue story of all time – and yet we do not always make it our own.

The words to 'Jesus is King' written by Wendy Churchill. Singing the Faith 327

1 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.

2 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.

3 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.

4 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.

Closing Prayers:

May the meekness of Christ open our eyes,
the kindness of Christ open our hearts,
the faithfulness of Christ open our hands so that we may live as his servants this day and always. **Amen.**

Have no fear for Christ has overcome the world.
Have no doubts for he has promised to be with you.
Have no anxiety for he is Lord and we shall share his joy, his life, his love and his victory. **Amen.**

The Lord says: 'Be of good cheer for I have overcome the world'.
We go in the peace of Christ,
the love of God,
and the joy of the Spirit.
We go in his name and for his glory.
We go – and we go in him and with him. **Amen.**