

Sunday Worship at Home, 22nd November, Christ the King (Stir-up Sunday)

Opening Prayers:

God meets us in our scattered lives,
let us worship him together. Amen

We stand before the throne of God with countless crowds from every nation and race, tribe and language.

**Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honour, power and might
be to our God for ever and ever. Amen.**

A Prayer of Confession:

Jesus said: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand." So let us turn away from sin and turn to Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

We have not always worshipped God, our creator. **Lord, have mercy.**
We have not always followed Christ, our Saviour. **Christ, have mercy.**
We have not always trusted in the Spirit, our guide. **Lord, have mercy.**

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

The Collect for Stir-up Sunday

God of holiness, your glory is proclaimed in every age: as we rejoice in the faith of your saints, inspire us to follow their example with boldness and joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:31-46

Jesus said:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."

He went on to say:

The righteous will ask when was it we saw you and did all these things? 'The king will answer "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'"

And again, they will ask was it we saw you and did not care for you? 'And the king will answer "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'

Reflection on the reading:

Our well-known reading from Matthew's Gospel today is not an easy one to hear if we understand it properly. In it, Jesus talks about the day when we will all stand before him in judgement and receive our reward of eternal life in heaven or eternal death in hell. He likens this to the shepherd separating sheep from goats. In modern times, and thanks to centuries of selective breeding, it is often easy to tell sheep and goats apart. But in the time and place that Jesus walked among us it was not so. Sheep would have been thinner, less woolly and similarly horned to goats. To the unskilled or from a distance the differences would not have been obvious and to separate them required both the knowledge of the shepherd and the physical closeness to examine them. We are not talking here about separating Mother Theresa and Adolf Hitler. Jesus said, 'Not everyone who cries "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven'. I have had relatives of those for whom I am preparing a funeral say "He didn't really believe in God but he did put the roof on the church hall", as if that makes up for lack of faith, but the truth is that we cannot work or buy our way into heaven. There are many in this world who think that simply living a good life is enough, but God judges our hearts not our actions. The kingdom of heaven belongs to those for whom care and concern for the sick, the hungry, the prisoner and the stranger are the constant fruit of their love of God and not the optional add on to living a good life. It's not about looking good on the outside but about being right with God on the inside. **Amen.**

The Creed

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named.
We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.
We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Be still and pray: *Begin with the Archbishops' prayer for our nation*

Loving Father God, be with us in our distress; be with our families, friends, and neighbours, our country and our world. Give health to the sick, hope to the fearful, and comfort to mourners. Give wisdom to our frontline and key workers, insight to our Government, and patience to us all. Overcome disease with the power of your new life, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Please add your own prayers at this point, then finish with **The Lord's Prayer:***

Conclusion

Christ our King make you faithful and strong to do his will, that you may reign with him in glory; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Remain forever in the light and peace of Christ. **Thanks be to God.**

Reverend Eddie