

St Columba's Church - Virtual Service - 22 November 2020

Welcome

Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!
For the Lord is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.

Hymn MP 454: Majesty, worship his majesty

Majesty, Worship His Majesty
Unto Jesus Be Glory Honour And Praise
Majesty, Kingdom, Authority
Flows From His Throne
Unto His Own
His Anthem Raise

So Exalt, Lift Upon High
The Name Of Jesus
Magnify Come Glorify
Christ, Jesus The King

Majesty, Worship His Majesty
Jesus Who Died, Now Glorified
King Of All Kings.

Prayer (Prayers come from Church of Scotland: Weekly Worship)

Let us today worship the Lord with gladness and come into his presence with joy. Let us know that the Lord is God. It is You God who made us; and we belong to God; we are God's people, and the sheep of God's pasture.
Let us enter God's gates with thanksgiving, and God's courts with praise, giving thanks to God, blessing God's name.
Let us give thanks to God for God's goodness, for God's steadfast love which endures for ever, for God's faithfulness to all generations. Let us give thanks for all the gifts we receive You, God, are our one and only King. We beg Your forgiveness for the other "kings" that we kneel before: money...power...gossip...self-righteousness...privilege...
We beg Your forgiveness, we who are broken and torn apart by our own doings and un-doings. Guide us to be Your servants. Lead us to trust in You as the only king we need. Direct our faith in Your sovereign power as we strive to follow Your Son who taught us to pray:

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 debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
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.

Bible readings

Psalm 100

A psalm. For giving grateful praise.

1 Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

2 Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.

3 Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his[a];
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;

give thanks to him and praise his name.

5 For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Matthew 25: 14 - 30

The Sheep and the Goats

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. **32** All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. **33** He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'

35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, **36** I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? **38** When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? **39** When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. **42** For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, **43** I was a stranger and

you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

44 "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

45 "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Hymn MP 20 - All people that on earth do dwell (v. 1, 3-4)

All people that on earth do dwell,
sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.
Serve him with joy, his praises tell,
come now before him and rejoice!

O enter then His gates with praise;
Approach with joy His courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless His name always,
For it is seemly so to do.

For why? the Lord our God is good;
His mercy is for ever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.

Reflection

Many years ago, I was at a church service on the island of Iona. As many will know, on that special island, the large abbey is packed for Sunday services. At one point during the service, the minister told us to find a stranger in the congregation and to tell each other what our favourite story from the Bible was. I thought; "Oh no, I hate these bits". However, even although then I did not know that much about the Bible at the time, I did know what was my favourite story: The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats.

That story, or parable, was inspiring. It was real. It was about action and not just words. It was this parable that inspired me the time I drove a truck across Europe in winter to war-torn Bosnia and we delivered food and clothing to an institution for the mentally-handicapped on what had been the front line. That night, in that institution, as the handles were taken off our bedroom to prevent patients trying to get in, I was thinking - this is action not just words.

It was also a story that inspired me in Tajikistan as we got food out to villages on icy cold mornings. I would be inspired by thinking about the sheep and the goats.

My guess is that many of you would also choose this parable as one of your favourites in the Bible, Because of the way it has inspired you.

Then, as I began to understand more about the Bible, I read that this parable is actually about end times. It's part of a section of Matthew's Gospel that talks about what will happen when Jesus returns to earth, And I thought "This is now more complicated. I liked it better before."

However, what I want to do now is explain how, actually, understanding more about this parable is even more inspiring.

The parable starts as follows: "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."

In the Old Testament, Isaiah chapter 53, described Jesus as someone who will have "no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him", and Jesus certainly came and made his home amongst the "least of people."

But this parable describes Jesus differently; The description of Jesus is of a Son of Man coming in glory, With all the angels with him And he will take his seat upon his throne, All the nations will be assembled before him. And it is a King that we will see when we come face to face again with Jesus.

In other words, when we meet Jesus, He will look important. He will Look like someone it is worth helping, But Jesus also knows what it's like to not look important, to be the "least of people."

And this parable is saying, Don't wait for that moment. Don't wait for that moment when it becomes obvious how great Jesus is. Instead act now in acts of kindness towards others, Including those seen as the "least of people."

"The king will say" - And it is Christ the King Sunday today - "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."

"Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king, on his throne, will answer them, "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."

'And Jesus 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." Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" Then he will answer them, "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.'

Don't wait. Act now. It eternally matters how we treat people now, Especially when no one else is looking, Especially when these people are in no position to give anything back to us. One day we will realise that how we treat people is how we are treating Christ the King. Let's realise this now.

Let me give you the example of Francis of Assisi. He was born a wealthy man, But he was not happy, he felt that life was incomplete. Then one day he was out riding and met a rather unattractive looking leper, And something, something amazing, made Francis dismount and fling his arms around this person. And Francis said, the face of the leper changed to the face of Christ, And Francis' life changed as well. What we do to the seemingly least of people, We are doing to Christ the King.

Martin of Tours was a Roman soldier. As he was entering a city, one time, a beggar stopped him and asked for money. Martin had no money but the beggar was blue and shivering with cold, And Martin gave what he had. He had his soldiers coat, worn and frayed as it was, He took it off, cut it in two and gave half to the beggar on the street. That night he had a dream. In it he saw heaven in all its glory, He saw all the angels, And in midst of them he saw Jesus, Son of Man, in all his glory, Sitting on his heavenly throne, and Jesus was wearing half a soldier's coat. Jesus, why are you wearing that battered old coat? an angel asks. Martin gave it to me, Jesus replies.

Let me put it another way, We are about to have communion. In a normal world, the cloths would be put out and the communion silverware would be on the table. But even today, the bread or biscuit in front of you, The wine or juice, These things are something special. These are now sacraments.

Although they are everyday physical objects the promise is that we meet God in these physical things through the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

And what this parable is pointing us towards is that the people around us are living sacraments. And the promise is that through them we meet Christ the King.
Amen.

Hymn: Ye gates lift up your heads on high
Ye gates lift up your heads on high;

ye doors that last for aye,
be lifted up, that so the King
of glory enter may.

But who of glory is the King?
The mighty Lord is this,
even that same Lord that great in might
and strong in battle is.

Ye gates, lift up your heads; ye doors,
doors that do last for aye,
be lifted up, that so the King
of glory enter may.
But who is he that is the King,
the King of glory? who is this?
The Lord of hosts, and none but he,
the King of glory is.

Coda:

Alleluia! alleluia!
alleluia! alleluia! alleluia!
Amen, amen, amen.

Prayer for Others

We pray for the coming of God's kingdom. You sent Your Son to bring good news to the poor, sight to the blind, freedom to captives and salvation to Your people:

anoint us with Your Spirit; rouse us to work in His name.

Loving God, by Your Spirit bring in Your kingdom.

Send us to bring help to the poor and freedom to the oppressed. Loving God, by Your Spirit bring in Your kingdom.

Send us to speak out and proclaim Your justice in the world.

Loving God, by Your Spirit bring in Your kingdom.

Send us to tell the world the good news of Your healing love.

Loving God, by Your Spirit
bring in Your kingdom.

Send us to those who mourn, to bring joy and gladness instead of grief.

Loving God, by Your Spirit bring in Your kingdom.

Send us to proclaim that the time is here for You to save Your people.

Loving God, bear us now as we pray in the silence....

Loving God, hear our prayers.

Amen.

Hymn: Christ triumphant, ever reigning (v. 1, 3-4)

Christ triumphant, ever reigning,
Saviour, Master, King!

Lord of heaven, our lives sustaining,
hear us as we sing:

Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name.

Priestly king, enthroned for ever
high in heaven above!
sin and death and hell shall never
stifle hymns of love: [Refrain]

So, our hearts and voices raising
through the ages long,
ceaselessly upon you gazing,
this shall be our song: [Refrain]

Blessing

May we go forth to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom;
May we be always willing to teach, baptise and nurture new believers;
May we in our daily lives respond to human need by loving service;
May we have the courage to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge
violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
May we join together to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and
renew the life of the earth. And the blessing of God, who creates, redeems and sustains us,
be with us always as we share in God's mission to the world.

Amen