***worship@home resources for 22 November***

Call to Worship (based on Ps 100)

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth;  
worship the LORD with gladness.  
**We bring our songs and our stories,  
our struggles and our sacrifices.**Know that the LORD is God.  
We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.  
**He designed us and understands us.**Enter his gates with thanksgiving,  
and his courts with praise.  
**We bring our gifts and our personalities,  
our strengths and weaknesses.**For the LORD is good  
and his steadfast love endures forever.  
**God is just and wise, caring and compassionate.  
We choose this day to worship God.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Wurrundjeri people of the Kulin nation who have been the custodians of the lands on which we live and worship for thousands of years.   
We pay respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and commit ourselves afresh to walk with all the First Peoples of this land in their search for justice.

HYMN TiS 228 Crown him with many crowns

Crown him with many crowns,  
the Lamb upon the throne;  
hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns  
all music but its own:  
awake, my soul, and sing  
of him who died for me,  
and hail him as your chosen king  
through all eternity.

Crown him the Lord of life,  
who triumphed o'er the grave,  
and rose victorious in the strife  
for those he came to save;  
his glories now we sing  
who died, and rose on high;  
who died, eternal life to bring,  
and lives that death may die.

Crown him the Lord of peace,  
whose power a scepter sways  
from pole to pole, that wars may cease  
absorbed in prayer and praise:  
his reign shall know no end,  
and round his pierced feet  
fair flowers of paradise extend  
their fragrance ever sweet.

Crown him the Lord of years,  
the Potentate of time,  
Creator of the rolling spheres,  
majestic and sublime;  
all hail, Redeemer, hail!  
for you have died for me;  
your praise shall never, never fail  
throughout eternity.

Matthew Bridges 1800-94 and Godfrey Thring 1823-1903 *alt*.

YouTube version here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7OCs0d_4vM>

prayer

Loving God,  
We gather as your people this morning  
to praise your name and to be encouraged in our walk with you.  
**We praise you that in Jesus you welcome all people –   
even those that we find it hard to love.**Let us learn from Jesus that you care especially  
for the last, the lost and the least.  
**Be with us through your Spirit as we worship**.

Sovereign God,  
we confess we have sometimes worshipped idols of power, wealth and security.  
**We have fallen into the ways of this world  
and have lost sight of the reign of God here on earth.**Forgive us.  
Call us back to your reign and your kingdom.  
**Call us afresh to love our neighbors as ourselves,  
to work for justice and to show mercy to others  
in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.**

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Jesus did not come to rule over us like a worldly king,  
but to serve us and show us that the way of God is the way of love.  
Hear the good news of our servant king: your sins are forgiven.  
**We commit ourselves to love and serve one another, just as Christ serves us.**

BIBLE READINGS

Ezekiel 34:11-23

For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among the scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.  … I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strays, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

As for you, my flock, says the Lord God: I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats: Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, but must you tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture? … Therefore, the Lord God says to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.

Matthew 25:31-46

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.” 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 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.”

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.” 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.

REFLECTION

Today is *Christ the King* Sunday – sometimes called the *Reign of Christ* Sunday – and it marks the end of the lectionary calendar year. Next week we begin the church year afresh with Advent. So today gives us the opportunity to reflect on what the reign of Christ as King looks like and also to briefly look back over the year we have spent with the Gospel of Matthew.

The opening verse in this most Jewish of Gospels states that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of David. The Hebrew word *Messiah* is translated into Greek as *Christos*, a title that basically means king. So the name Jesus *Christ* is actually Jesus *the King*, the title given to Jesus from the opening verse of the Gospel. Other images are provided to us in Matthew that complement and contrast the image of king … Jesus is Emmanuel (God with us) … a refugee fleeing violence (from another king) … a great teacher and interpreter of the Jewish Law whose words surpass the teachings of Moses (think Sermon on the Mount) … a gentle and compassionate healer … a humble servant and saviour who dies for others … a resurrected Lord who claims all authority in heaven and on earth. So the image of Jesus the King has been expanded and re-imagined by Matthew who presents a multi-dimensional portrait of Jesus.

In today’s passage, Jesus is presented as the powerful Son of Man figure from Daniel 7:13-14 who is granted eternal kingship over all nations and peoples. In this role, Jesus acts as Judge and the scene in the parable is one of judgment and discernment. People from all the nations come before Jesus who separates the people as a shepherd separates sheep from goats, which look quite similar and are often mixed together in a Middle Eastern flock.



The discernment is made on the basis of how the people have responded to human need around them – whether they have fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked, taken care of the sick, welcomed the stranger and visited those in prison. One group of people have not discerned the face of Jesus in the poor and the least, but have also not responded with mercy and compassion. The other group of people have likewise not discerned the face of Jesus in the poor and the least, but have reached out with mercy and compassion to those in need.

So one type of person has loved their neighbour in practical ways, offering simple acts of kindness and compassion and justice to others. Their actions have matched the faith they profess with their mouths. The other type of person has apparently not acted in this way.

While we may raise all sorts of questions about the fairness of this discernment of Jesus, it is consistent with his teaching and interactions with people throughout this Gospel. At the core of his message is the call to love God and love one’s neighbour, defined very widely. The new insight here is Jesus’ close personal identification with our human neighbour. The final words of Jesus in Matthew are ‘I am with you always to the end of the age’. Based on this parable, one way that Jesus is with us is in the face and presence of our neighbour.

So as we say goodbye to the year of Matthew, let us take heart from Jesus our King that there is a simple way to be reassured that we are living in God’s kingdom, which is to live with mercy and with justice towards others, to seek to be peacemakers and to walk the walk of faith. Are you up for the challenge?

HYMN Whatever you do (tune TiS 143 Immortal invisible God only wise)

"Whatever you do to the least ones of these,  
I tell you in truth that you do unto me!"  
Lord Jesus, you taught us, may we learn anew  
that when we serve others, we also serve you.

When poor, waiting children pray hunger will end,  
when those long-forgotten cry out for a friend,  
when thirsty ones whisper, "O Lord, where are you?" —  
we hear, in their longing, that you're calling, too.

In prisons and jails, Lord, we find a surprise;  
we see you in people whom others despise.  
At hospital bedsides we offer a prayer  
and find, when we visit the sick, you are there.

When we reach to others in flood-stricken lands  
and offer our hearts there, and offer our hands —  
we notice, Lord Jesus, the gift of your grace:  
we see, in the crowds of the suffering, your face.

"Lord, when did we see you?" Your teaching is clear  
that when we serve others, we're serving you here.  
And when your church heeds you and helps those in pain,  
then out of the chaos, hope rises again.

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YouTube version of Immortal invisible here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spE-BE23qxA&t=5s>

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Living God,  
Help us take to heart the words of Christ, who said:  
*“I was hungry and you gave me food,  
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,  
I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”*

Help us to create loving and hospitable communities  
and to overcome any fear and prejudice we may have of those  
who come from other lands to live among us.  
Give our political leaders the courage and wisdom  
to overturn the cruelty of years of indefinite detention for asylum seekers.

Compassionate God,   
transform our hearts and our hands so that  
when the discouraged cry for hope, we can listen and walk with them;  
when the hungry cry for bread, we can supply their practical needs;  
when the thirsty cry for water, we can point them towards the living water;  
when the suffering cry for help, we can be your comforting hands;  
when the bound cry for freedom, we can pursue justice for them;  
and when the outcasts cry for love, we can embrace them with your love.

Healing God,  
We pause now to remember and name before you situations and people  
who are in need of your healing touch …  
We pray for your peace that surpasses our human understanding,  
for relief from pain and anxiety,  
for strength for those who are weary and struggling  
and for hope where life seems so difficult right now.

We pray now in the words Jesus taught us, saying: **Our Father in heaven…**

BENEDICTION

May you go into the world this week  
praising the steadfast love of God  
overflowing with the compassion of Jesus Christ  
and carrying within you the creative energy of the Holy Spirit.

**We go in peace to love and serve the Lord.**

SENDING SONG TiS 720 Halle, halle, halle (Hallelujah means ‘Praise the LORD’)

Hal-le, hal-le, hal-le-lu-jah!  
Hal-le, hal-le, hal-le-lu-jah!  
Hal-le, hal-le, hal-le-lu-jah!  
Hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu-jah!

Caribbean traditional

YouTube version here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjf6bYQRbtU>