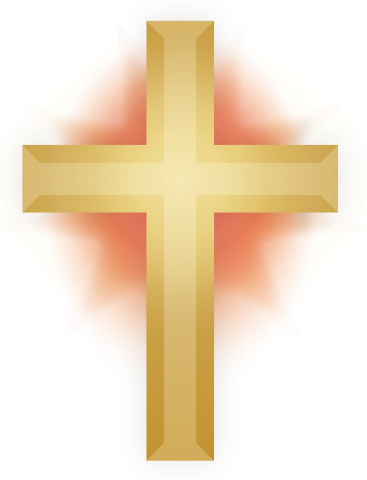
**NOVEMBER 22nd 2020**







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**CHRIST THE KING**

**The Sheep and the Goats**

**Then the King will say “Come, take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.”**

*Matthew 25: v 34.*

**Welcome to our Sunday Service today. Today is the Festival of Christ the King. We focus our hearts and minds on the glorious and awesome truth that Jesus is Lord, He is in control, He is King of Kings now and always**

**HYMN:** Our first hymn focuses on the Kingship of Jesus Christ: Alleluia sing to Jesus His the sceptre his the throne

**A time now to say sorry to God:**

Jesus says, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.

’ *A short time of silence*

**All:** **Heavenly Father, have mercy upon us, forgive us where we have gone wrong and sinned, and help us to walk from now on in your way. Amen.**

May our Father God, the God of love and power, bring you back to Himself, forgive you through the death of His Son Jesus, free you from your sins, and restore you to newness of life by His Spirit

**PRAYER OF THE WEEK:**

**Eternal Father, whose Son Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven that he might rule over**

**all things as Lord and King: keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace,**

**and bring the whole created order to worship at his feet; who is alive and reigns with you,**

**in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.**

**BIBLE READING Matthew 25: v 31-46. (The sheep and the goats)**

‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 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. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

‘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. 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, 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.”

‘Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?”

‘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.”

‘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. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 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.”

‘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?”

‘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.”

‘Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.’

**SERMON**

**LET US PRAY**

Dear Lord Jesus, please help us to see something more of your wonderful Kingship, and to respond as faithful subjects. Amen.

Matthew 25 v 31 – 46. The sheep and the goats

A famous painter was to paint a portrait of an aristocratic lady, a fading dowager. At the end of the first session, she made the imperious observation, expressing the hope that he would do her justice. “Madam,” he replied, It is not justice you need, but mercy!”I

I looked up Google to see if it could put names to those 2 characters, and when it was unable to do so, I wondered if the incident was fictitious. Unlike my next illustration, which concerns Napoleon Bonaparte, and a mother whose son was awaiting judgment from Napoleon, on account of his having committed a serious military offence. She pleaded with the great man for mercy. “Why?” Napoleon asked, “What has he done to deserve my mercy?” The mother replied “If my son deserved it , it wouldn’t be mercy! Napoleon subsequently pardoned the lad and released him.

Justice and mercy, in fact judgment in general, is in the hands of the King. Today we celebrate Christ the King, and the passage that the C of E authorities have chosen is Jesus’ parable of the sheep and the goats. Jesus’ picture , in parable or story form , of the Last Judgment.

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate the people one from another.”

This will be Jesus’ final task on this earth, as He exercises judgment, as He dispenses justice, as He grants mercy to some, and condemns others. Now normally in a sermon, I work you all very hard, and I plead with you to put any Bible passage in context – usually the context of the whole chapter. But today I am going to work you twice as hard, because the context here is two chapters. At the beginning of ch 24, the 12 disciples ask Jesus

“Lord, what will happen to the Jerusalem Temple, and when are you going to bring in the Kingdom of Heaven, the new age?”

And Jesus takes 2 chapters to answer them. In the rest of ch 24, Jesus describes various signs pointing to the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, and various signs signifying the approach of His Second Coming. And then in Matthew 25, Jesus tells 3 parables, to emphasise His point. 3 parables with one similarity and 3 slightly different messages. In the parable of the ten bridesmaids, there is a division – 5 were wise , with oil for their lamps, and five were foolish, with none. Jesus says Watch , be ready for His Second Coming.

In the parable of the talents, which Ann preached on last week, there was again a division – two men used their talents wisely, and one did nothing. So Jesus says use what God has given to you, time, talents, money, whatever, in God’s service, for Him. In today’s parable of sheep and goats, there is again a division, and the message is – well, we will see what the message is shortly.

Jesus has been describing Himself in these stories. In the parable of the bridesmaids, He is the Bridegroom. In the parable of the talents, He is the Master. In the parable of the sheep and goats, He is the Son of Man seated in glory, He is the King passing judgment.

So the King separates all the nations of the world into 2 groups, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And He begins with the group on the right, appropriately described as the righteous. He gives an invitation, in some of the loveliest words in the New Testament

“Come you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the Kingdom PREPARED for you, since the creation of the world.” In other words, when God created everything, He created a world where there would be no death or mourning or crying or pain or covid or disease. And that is what He will usher in, according to Revelation 21, when He brings in the new Heaven and new earth. We spoilt that world, and murder and greed and selfishness and many other evils came in. But what God prepared was a glorious Kingdom, this eternal existence of beauty and glory and majesty was prepared for a people who acknowledged His Kingship. It is an inheritance for the King’s subjects which He gladly shares with them .And then the King goes through the things they have done in their lifetime, clearly things that they did, clearly things that were second nature to them. But they don’t understand how they did these things, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the prisoner, to Jesus.

And the King’s reply is amazing “Whatever you did for the least of these my brothers, you did for Me. When Jesus refers to His brothers in this way, He usually refers to Christians, the household of faith.

Let me give one example, a little quaint, but none the worse for that. Martin of Tours lived in C4 AD, he was a Roman soldier, a Christian, and he became the patron saint of France. One day, entering a city, a beggar asked him for alms. Martin had no money, but he could see that the beggar was blue and shivering with cold, so he took his large military coat off, cut it in two, and gave one half to the beggar. That night he had a dream of Heaven, all the angels were gathered round, and Jesus was in the middle, wearing half a Roman soldier’s coat. One of the angels asked Him, “Lord, why are you wearing that battered old cloak? Who gave it to you?” And Jesus replied “My servant Martin gave it to Me.” Then in his dream, Jesus turned to Martin and said “ Whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for Me.”

Let me apply this to ourselves. The person that you are tempted to avoid in church is Jesus to you. The person who irritates you most is Jesus to you. The person who is least like you is Jesus to you. And I am sure that you can continue to make other applications.

The Church of England has asked preachers to keep sermons shorter during Lockdown, so I am sure that you will be relieved that I don’t have time to elaborate on the second group. Other than to say – this division is real. Jesus was constantly talking of this division, and it is a sobering thought that the Person in the Bible who most talked about hell is Jesus Himself. Notice too that this group is not said to be filled with murderers or adulterers or paedophiles. Just people who did not act. People who failed to respond. People who did nothing. Again, a very sobering thought.

But we finish by coming back to that lovely invitation. It is an invitation that matches the one of last week “Well done, good and faithful servant. Come and share your Master’s happiness.”

V 34 – “Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. “

**Hymn: King of Kings**

**PRAYERS**

Let us bow our heads before the King of Glory, and pray to our Heavenly Father for His church and for His world.

Loving God, even if we cannot meet to worship in our church , we pray for the ongoing work of our clergy and congregation as they continue to reach out and support all those in need, and to bring about your Kingdom here on earth.

We are your people – **The sheep of your pasture**

Loving God, as the world continues to struggle with the pandemic, we pray for all the scientists working to create a viable vaccine, for all the administrators in Track and Trace, and those at Testing Stations. Guide them and guard them as they go about their work.

We are your people – **The sheep of your pasture**

Loving God, we pray for our own government as it tries to decide the best way forward to combat Covid 19, to resolve Brexit, and to deal with climate change. Make them aware that only by listening to you can the right results be obtained.

We are your people – **The sheep of your pasture**

Loving God, we pray for all those who are isolated by the pandemic, for those made redundant, for those on furlough, for all those whose businesses are no longer viable , and all those who feel that there is no purpose in life. Provide support and protection for them through these difficult times.

We are your people – **The sheep of your pasture**

Loving God, we pray for all those who are sick in mind, body or soul. We pray especially for the those known to us, for Angela and Rita Davidson recovering from operations, for Emma Broadhurst, for Michael Pulvermacher, Baby Erica Ivy, and the residents of Winton House.

In their need we know you will be with them.

We are your people – **The sheep of your pasture**

Loving God, we give thanks for the lives of all those whom we have loved and who are now with you. We ask for comfort and peace for all who mourn, and we pray that for the family of Neil Heywood, whose funeral is here in church on Monday.

We are your people – **The sheep of your pasture**

Loving God, you have shown us such love and humility, we offer you our thanks and praise. Amen.

**We join now in the Family prayer Jesus taught His followers 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 trespasses**

**As we forgive those who trespass against us**

**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**

**NOTICES**

**Although we cannot hold services again till 6th December St Michael’s church is open for private prayer from 9.30 – 4.30 every day. Prayer materials are in the church for use inside the church and to take away. And please look at the prayer resources issued by the Church of England for these 4 weeks of Lockdown- #Prayer for the Nation/Thy Kingdom Come**

**HYMN; Our final hymn celebrate again the Kingship of Jesus Christ: Crown Him with many Crowns**

**BLESSING**

May the Love of the Lord Jesus the King of Kings draw you to Himself

May the Power of the Lord Jesus strengthen you to serve Him

And may the Joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts

And so may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and all those whom you love, now and for ever more. Amen

**Suggested Readings this week**

Mon Nov 23rd. Luke 21: v 1-4 Tues Nov 24th. Luke 21: v 5-11. Wed Nov 25th. Luke 21: v 12-19. Thurs Nov 26th Luke 21: v 20-28. Fri Nov 27th. Luke 21: v 29-33. Sat Nov 28th. Luke 21: v 34-36.

**PARISH DIARY**

**Monday 23rd November 12.30PM FUNERAL OF Neil Heywood**

**7.30pm Zoom Bible Study Just 10 : Don’t Murder**

**Sunday 29th November Morning Worship with choir – on website**

**Tuesday 1st December 7.30pm Zoom Bible Study – Just 10 : Honour Your Father and Mother**

**Sunday 6th December ADVENT SUNDAY (LIVE SERVICES WE HOPE )**

**09.00am Holy Communion**

**10.30 Parish Communion**

**3.45pm TOY AND CHRISTINGLE SERVICE in Church**

**Monday 7th December 7.30pm Bible Study/Growth Group – Just 10 : Honour Your Father and Mother**

**Sunday 13th December 09.00am Holy Communion**

**10.30am Morning Worship with Sunday School**

**Tuesday 15th December Bible Study Christmas Social – To be confirmed**

**Sunday 20th December 09.00am Holy Communion**

**10.30am Parish Communion with Sunday School**

**6.00pm CAROLS BY CANDLIGHT**

**CHRISTMAS EVE 4.00pm CRIB SERVICE**

**11.30pm MIDNIGHT COMMUNION**

**CHRISTMAS DAY 10.30am FAMILY SERVICE WITH CAROLS AND COMMUNION**

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