

Sunday Morning Worship – Christ the King
Readings, Reflection & Prayers for 24th November

Daniel 7.9-10,13-14

As I watched,
thrones were set in place,
 and an Ancient One took his throne;
his clothing was white as snow,
 and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames,
 and its wheels were burning fire.
A stream of fire issued
 and flowed out from his presence.
A thousand thousand served him,
 and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him.
The court sat in judgement,
 and the books were opened.
As I watched in the night visions,

I saw one like a human being
 coming with the clouds of heaven.
And he came to the Ancient One
 and was presented before him.
To him was given dominion
 and glory and kingship,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
 should serve him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
 that shall not pass away,
and his kingship is one
 that shall never be destroyed.



This is the word of the Lord

Revelation 1.4b-8

John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Look! He is coming with the clouds;
every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him;
and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.

So it is to be. Amen.

'I am the Alpha and the Omega', says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

This is the word of the Lord.

John 18.33-37

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered, 'Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?' Pilate replied, 'I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?'

Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.' Pilate asked him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.'

Reflection by Margaret Mandrell

Reflection for Christ the King, November 24.

The Jews were hoping for an earthly kingdom in which they, as God's chosen people, would be freed from the tyranny of a foreign power. The righteous Jews were skilled at keeping the rules of their faith, but often forgot the message at its heart, "You shall love the Lord with all your heart, and with all your might." Jesus used pictures to describe his Kingdom and spoke about sowing seeds, pearls of great price, wedding banquets, yeast, and how a small mustard seed could become a great plant. These illustrated how his kingdom would increase, as believers repented and entered this kingdom. All could belong, including those who were seen as having little worth, those lacking in power and status. In this kingdom, the righteous would shine like stars.

I wonder how you would describe God if you were asked for a pictorial image? In our first reading we have a vivid and relatable depiction of an Ancient One, on a throne, with white hair and clothing. Fire surrounds him, and many thousands attend him. Then we have a prophetic vision of Jesus coming to be presented, receiving dominion, glory and kingship which would endure forever.

Daniel was writing in the time of exile, firstly when the Babylonians were in power under Nebuchadnezzar, and then under Cyrus the Persian. It was he who allowed the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild their way of life. Daniel wanted to assert that God was sovereign, even over the powerful nations that surrounded his chosen people. He looked to a time when God would gather all his children to him again. He would establish a kingdom which would last forever. Daniel pictures Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of Man, being given domination by the Ancient of Days, God the Father.

Revelation was written when the first century church was facing persecution. Jesus is portrayed as the glorified Son of Man, the Lion of Judah, the worthy Lamb, the conquering King of kings and rightful ruler of the earthly and heavenly kingdoms. We are reminded that God is eternal and that we are loved. We are forgiven through Jesus' death and resurrection which takes away sin and gives us hope. The passage points to the second coming, and the phrase "coming with clouds" recalls Daniel's vision some 600 years earlier.

Pilate, the Roman governor, was asked by the Jewish leaders to try Jesus. Jesus told Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world, not maintained by military might, backed up by soldiers, but rather a kingdom which is open to all, through faith and repentance. Central to this kingdom is the death of Jesus on the cross, showing his willingness to make the great sacrifice of a painful, prolonged ordeal as a sinless saviour. Instead of a gold crown, he would wear a crown of thorns, instead of fine clothes showing wealth and status, he would present a battered, beaten body as a sin offering.

Christ's Kingdom is based on grace, through faith and all are invited to belong. We are called to love God and our neighbour, to enjoy oneness with God and other people, and to become new creations through the gospel. We are to share this good news and to grow in compassion, joy, love and grace. We can strive to be authentic, approachable and serve others in humility. We are called to respond in love, forgive and have courage. We are asked to reach out to the weak, the stranger, the hungry and thirsty, the lost and the lonely. In these ways we will draw others to be part of the kingdom, to know the blessings we experience.

Prayers

To the bidding “**Lord in your mercy**” please respond “**hear our prayer**”.

Lord we pray for your church throughout the world.

We pray for our own Diocese, for Bishop Martin, for our Clergy, Readers, Authorised Lay Minsters and all who serve you through St. Stephen’s and in the wider community – praising you and serving the community.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord as we reach the end of the church year, and we celebrate the Festival of Christ the King deepen our awareness of the triumph of your son our saviour.

Strengthen **our** faith, open **our** eyes to see him, alive in the heart of our worship, in the words of the liturgy, in the lift of the music and in our receiving of the blessed sacrament.

Teach us that prayer is true, enduring and full of grace, and ties us to you through the deepest workings of the Holy Spirit.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Guide those in authority in the ways of righteousness.

Help us to build a world where communities are guided by love and truth;

where peace reigns,

where people are not divided by race or religion,

where darkness and despair have been cast aside and

where authority only comes from carrying out your will.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our own community, for our families and friends wherever they maybe and ask that you watch over them.

Fill our homes with holiness, love, and hospitality,

with cheerfulness, kindness, generosity, and goodness.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for the growing presence of children and young people in our church community, for Sunday Stars, Little stars, our new Connect service, 187 Squadron, the Brownies and Sea Scouts and for the outreach to the schools in our parish.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We bring to your love those who are sick, the elderly, the housebound those in hospital, residential or nursing care and those who are suffering through caring for another.

And of our own we bring to you:

Bill Jones, Leon and Valda Bailey, June Hume, Ken and Joyce Pringle, Ann Hunt, Anuwat Wanggane, Alan Coe, Jack Tubby, Gloria, Roger Jones, Patricia Ash, Ryan Day, Brenda Hulland, David New, and Adrina and Alan Price.

Comfort and sustain those who are in need of your grace at this time and as we share a moment of silence together, we bring before you those known only unto you.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We hold to you all those who are suffering the pain of bereavement and we remember those who have recently died: Janet Shuard.

We remember with love and gratitude those whose anniversary falls at this time: Ella Macdonald, Max Plummer, John Sayers, Gillian Plester, and Adrian Keen and those we love but see no longer.

Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them.

May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

May we who come to your table with joyful and expectant hearts, be nourished and strengthened in body and spirit to serve you in this world, to the glory of your name.

In thankfulness for God's many blessing and Christ's transforming presence in our lives we say together.

Merciful Father

Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.