

**Worship at Home for North West Wiltshire Pastorate**  
**Sunday November 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020, 'Christ the King.'**

**Opening words**

*Born a king, but like no other,  
Not for him a royal throne –  
Christ our King, we come to worship you;  
We make space and time to be with you.  
You deserve the entirety of our focus,  
We hear your word,  
We let it fall where it needs to root and grow and bear fruit.  
Here is a place of safety,  
Here is the place we are nurtured,  
Here we know the joy of a welcome  
And loving acceptance.  
And so we come –*

Our first reading is from **Matthew's gospel, chapter 25 verses 31-46**, and is followed by these words from the 2020 URC Prayer Handbook, written by Karen Campbell:

*Why is injustice so beguiling?*

*Of course, when we name it –  
Point it out –  
No one wants to believe they are on the side of the unjust.  
Yet how easily we drift along,  
benefitting from the unjust systems  
which uphold the ways of the world.*

*We wish there was no 'rich and poor',  
but are grateful to live comfortably in our comfort.  
We wish nations did not oppress their neighbours,  
but are thankful to live in a nation  
counted amongst the powerful.  
We abhor racism and prejudice,  
but are slow to recognise these traits in ourselves.*

*We do not always think things through,  
But accept our place in the way things are.*

*They say that sheep tend to follow,  
without a thought to where  
they are being led.  
Were you right, then, to compare us to sheep?*

*And yet you, yourself, promise to be our shepherd,  
tending your beloved flock.  
So cut through the beguiling tones of injustice  
And let us hear and follow you.*

### **Readings**

Our next readings today come from the prophet **Ezekiel, chapter 34 verses 11-16 & 20-24** and **Ephesians, chapter 1 verses 15-23**.

### **Reflection**

Whilst I am never to be found on Facebook or WhatsApp, I confess to enjoying Twitter. Perhaps it is its 'bite-sized' nature, maybe it is the level of control I can exercise over my tweets and who sees them, but mainly it is because I can find little gems of information.

Two examples this past week. One an idea, the other a quote.

The idea – the 'lost stock box' an initiative set up whereby 3 or 4 new items of clothing that would otherwise go to landfill are sent to you. For a set sum of money which is given to a family in Bangladesh, this sum of money is sufficient for a minimum of a week.

The quote – from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, " A promise to the poor is particularly sacred."

Why those two – and what do they have to do with our readings?

All the readings set for today concern themselves with leadership and the exercise of power and what it means to be amongst people who are led.

The gospel takes it further, frighteningly so because it raises questions of selection and separation, and some may see in the words similarities to historic events that cannot be repeated, on the other hand the sheep and goats may bring to mind

instances of practical engagement such as the early Holy Club at Oxford founded by John and Charles Wesley, or Mother Theresa's work amongst the poorest in India right up current work with refugees or the homeless.

Christ the King – but a king like no other.

Christ the King – who turns all we know about kingship on its head.

Christ the King – who challenges us to think about who we help and why?

The idea of alternative Christmas presents has now become commonplace, when it begun and individuals found they had been given a cow or a toilet there were many raised eyebrows; now it just makes sense.

But a one-off gift is like a pebble thrown into the vastest ocean.

'Lost stock' has captured imagination, even getting into Country Living; but all these ideas need to have as a strapline those words from Desmond Tutu, like Ezekiel the focus here is on the greatness of God demonstrated in His capacity to find, protect, **provide for** and guide. The fat sheep have tucked into what is before them but spared no thought for those who aren't with them.

Out of sight does not mean a free pass equivalent to being put out of mind.

Ezekiel had condemnation for those who governed and ruled only for themselves and their own.

Paul was writing to a new, fledgling community of faith, to encourage them in their attempts to establish a new order, different from that inhabited by Emperors and Kings who used fear and violence to keep their power.

In the gospel Jesus asks the question as to how much of what is done for those in need is instinctive and how much is done consciously in his name and for his sake? I don't think one can exclude the other but it raises questions about motivation and if we reflected further would our answers surprise.

So today, Christ the King, Christ our King; what sort of subjects are we? Are we the kind he welcomes, wants, needs to grow his kingdom?

Amen.

## **Prayers of Intercession**

Lord of love,  
Abundant love, unceasing love,  
Love that flows freely into the world,  
love such as the world cannot give;  
love rooted in humanity,  
love borne by sacrifice,  
love that loves us – even when we cannot love ourselves.

On this day of kingship and power  
We think of service and humility;  
We pray for all who grasp hold of power  
and think their life has achieved its ultimate goal  
but understand nothing of the responsibility  
that goes hand in hand with the position.

On this day of kingship and power  
We think of those who are power-less;  
who see others make decisions for them  
and do so with no regard for what they may want or need.

We think of service and humility,  
for those who it is assumed are content  
to receive only what is given;  
perhaps as a gesture,  
perhaps because it is 'the right thing' to do.  
We pray for an end to assumptions;  
and the beginnings of true dialogue.

Loving Lord,  
Your kingship was like no other;  
A blueprint - yet one no longer followed.  
Help us to consider again what you ask of us;  
where we need to change, give us the means to  
make it happen.  
If we give – and act – and pray

but our reasons are not pure or true;  
rebuke us – restore us – re-set us.  
So that our paths may be your paths;  
And that we, once again  
Know the real meaning of service.  
Amen.

***Let us say together The Lord's Prayer.***

Our Father,  
Who art in heaven ...

**Blessing**

Go, willing to welcome interruptions,  
And to see them as opportunities by another name.  
Go, seeking new ways to show love and generosity,  
And be glad to be able to do so.  
Go, into a world with no walls  
And find those who think they are of no worth.  
God to them and tell them 'you are loved.'  
And may that same love,  
The love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
Be yours,  
Today, and always  
**Amen.**