

Hymn StF 319 Christ triumphant ever reigning,

- 1 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.
- 2 Word incarnate, truth revealing, Son of Man on earth!
power and majesty concealing by your humble birth:
Chorus
- 3 Suffering servant, scorned, ill-treated, victim crucified!
death is through the cross defeated, sinners justified:
Chorus
- 4 Priestly king, enthroned for ever high in heaven above!
sin and death and hell shall never stifle hymns of love:
Chorus
- 5 So, our hearts and voices raising through the ages long,
ceaselessly upon you gazing, this shall be our song:
Chorus

Michael Saward (1932–2015)

Blessing

Let us go out into the world to live and love to God's praise and glory.
And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
rest and remain on each one of us, now and evermore, Amen.



One of the earliest C4th images of Jesus from the catacombs of Rome

Worship for Sunday 22nd November 2020 Pre-Advent

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Call to Worship

Come, let us worship and bow down before the Lord our Maker:
for he is our God and we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Hymn: StF 335 Rejoice! The Lord is King

- 1 Rejoice, the Lord is King. Your Lord and King adore;
mortals, give thanks and sing, and triumph evermore:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice; rejoice, again I say, rejoice.
- 2 Jesus the Saviour, reigns, the God of truth and love;
when he had purged our stains, he took his seat above:
Chorus.
- 3 His kingdom cannot fail; he rules o'er earth and heaven;
the keys of death and hell are to our Jesus given:
Chorus.
- 4 He sits at God's right hand till all his foes submit,
and bow to his command, and fall beneath his feet:
Chorus.
- 5 Rejoice in glorious hope; Jesus the Judge shall come,
and take his servants up to their eternal home:
*We soon shall hear the archangel's voice
the trump of God shall sound: Rejoice!*

Charles Wesley (1707-1788) and John Taylor (1750-1826)

Prayer of Adoration

Loving God, we praise and thank you
for your many promises to us:
the promise of the Rainbow - bringing hope to all the earth;
the promise of the Good Shepherd – that you will take care of your flock;
the promise of the Resurrection – that evil and death are overcome;
the promise of Christ to us – that he will be with us forever.

Loving God, we praise and thank you
for your many promises to us and for the security they give us:
hope for dark days;
courage for painful times
and a deep joy that cannot be taken away.

Loving God, we praise and thank you
for your many promises to us, in Jesus's Name, Amen.

Psalm 100

Sing to the Lord, all the world!
Worship the Lord with joy; come before him with happy songs!
Acknowledge that the Lord is God.
He made us, and we belong to him; we are his people, we are his flock.
Enter the temple gates with thanksgiving, go into its courts with praise.
Give thanks to him and praise him.
The Lord is good; his love is eternal
and his faithfulness lasts for ever.

Reading Ezekiel 34:11- 16; 20 - 24

"For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

"As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet?

"Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says to them: See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken.

Prayer of Confession

Loving Shepherd of the sheep, we confess to you
that sometimes we take your gifts and promises to us
and your loving care for us for granted.
We forget to make ourselves aware of their needs of others,
and to share what we have with them.
We are like the strong sheep of Ezekiel's parable,
pushing aside the weak.

Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray that we might serve Christ the King in meeting the needs of others.

'When I was hungry, you gave me food; when thirsty, you gave me drink.'

God with us, we pray for the hungry and thirsty of our world:
for the victims of famine, drought, natural disaster
and the disruption of warfare throughout our troubled world.
Show us what we should do.
Your kingdom come: your will be done.

*'When I was a stranger, you took me into your home;
when naked, you clothed me.'*

God with us, we pray for those without homes or protection from the elements:
for refugees, the destitute,
those thrown out of home, those living on the street.
Show us what we should do.
Your kingdom come: your will be done.

'When I was ill, you came to my help.'

God with us, we pray for those who are ill:
for those with chronic or life-threatening conditions,
those who are sick in mind or spirit.
We pray for ...
Show us what we should do.
Your kingdom come: your will be done.

'When I was in prison, you visited me.'

God with us, we pray for those who are imprisoned:
for criminals and prisoners of conscience
and those imprisoned by fear or guilt.
Show us what we should do.
Your kingdom come: your will be done.

In Jesus' name we love and serve.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer We say the prayer that Jesus gave us:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.

Hymn StF 256 When I needed a neighbour were you there?

- 1 When I needed a neighbour were you there, were you there?
When I needed a neighbour were you there?
*And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter,
Were you there?*
- 2 I was hungry and thirsty, were you there, were you there?
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there?
Chorus
- 3 I was cold, I was naked, were you there, were you there?
I was cold, I was naked, were you there?
Chorus
- 4 When I needed a shelter were you there, were you there?
When I needed a shelter were you there?
Chorus
- 5 When I needed a healer were you there, were you there?
When I needed a healer were you there?
Chorus
- 6 Wherever you travel I'll be there, I'll be there,
Wherever you travel I'll be there.
*And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter,
I'll be there.*

Sydney Carter (1915-2004)

Meditation by Chris Odell (Sheasby)

Why is it, Lord, that so often your coming into our lives
takes us by surprise, finds us unprepared?

We expect to meet you in church, blessing our offering of money;
we do not expect to meet you begging from us on the streets.

We expect to see your presence in the family life of our church;
we do not expect to see you in the hollow eyes of a refugee child.

We expect to feel you close in the emotion of prayer and praise;
and are surprised to find you close in the dull aches and pains of everyday life.

Loving God, fill us with your Spirit, so that we may always be ready
for the surprise comings of Jesus into our lives. Amen.

**Forgive us, Loving Shepherd,
and help us to live in the unselfish way you call us to live,
as followers of our Saviour, Jesus Christ,
who laid down his life for the sheep.**

**As Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, hear then his words of grace
to us: 'Your sins are forgiven'. Thanks be to God, Amen.**

Hymn StF 481 The Lord's my Shepherd (Townend version)

- 1 The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want. He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters, His goodness restores my soul.
*And I will trust in You alone. And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me, Your goodness will lead me home.*
- 2 He guides my ways in righteousness, and He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy, I feast on His pure delights.
Refrain
- 3 And though I walk the darkest path, I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.
Refrain

Stuart Townend

Reading Matthew 25 v 31 – 46 Jesus said:

"When the Son of Man comes as King and all the angels with him, he will sit on his royal throne, and the people of all the nations will be gathered before him. Then he will divide them into two groups, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the righteous people at his right and the others at his left. Then the King will say to the people on his right, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father! Come and possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you ever since the creation of the world. I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me.'

The righteous will then answer him, 'When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you? When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?'

The King will reply, 'I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!'

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Away from me, you that are under God's curse! Away to the eternal fire which has been prepared for the Devil and his angels! I was hungry but you would not feed me, thirsty but you would not give me a drink; I was a stranger but you would not welcome me in your

homes, naked but you would not clothe me; I was sick and in prison but you would not take care of me.'

Then they will answer him, 'When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and we would not help you?'

The King will reply, 'I tell you, whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, you refused to help me.' These, then, will be sent off to eternal punishment, but the righteous will go to eternal life."

Meditation Toll gate to the kingdom by Gerd Theissen From The Shadow of the Galilean

Suddenly the beggar children whom we had met at the toll gate emerged.

They held out their hands and barred our way.

'What are you doing?' I asked.

'We're playing at toll collectors.'

'What frontier is this?'

'This is the beginning of the kingdom of God.'

I wanted to explode with anger, but I restrained myself.

Why shouldn't I play their game?

So I did.

'What must I do to enter into your kingdom?'

The children laughed. The oldest one said:

'Unless you become like children again,
you will not enter the kingdom of God.'

'Who rules in your kingdom?'

'We rule in this kingdom. The children. The kingdom is ours.'

'And what duty must I pay?'

'Give us something to eat.'

'Is that all?'

'There is no kingdom you can enter so easily.

All you must do is give away what you possess. Then you belong to it.'

I didn't know whether it was a game or in real earnest.

I said: 'All right. Here is the duty for your kingdom.'

And I gave them a couple of loaves of bread and some fruit.

Their faces shone.

They gave way.

We were allowed to pass.

We had crossed this frontier as well.

Address

The parables we have been following in recent weeks often end with a sting in the tail. The good people get prosperity, the bad people end their days in torment. This too is a hard reading for it contains both a promise and a curse. There is a pat on the back for those who have helped others - especially those

who have helped unwittingly, unknowingly. Positive affirmation, not just for thought out decisions but also the unwitting, spontaneous ones, when love has been the prime motivation.

Then there is the prospect of a sad end for those who didn't help, even those who didn't know they were ignoring someone's need.

We are often encouraged to think about the needs of other people "less well off than ourselves", both in this country and around the world. The homeless, the destitute, refugees, the hungry, people in war torn lands, it seems as if the list is endless. We feel we must help but we might well ask "what difference can we make?"

You know the saying "the straw which broke the camel's back"? We use that to show that one small thing can make all the difference. There is a similar story about two birds sitting on the branch of a tree, watching it snow. One asks the other, how can there ever be peace in the world? What difference can one person make to international peace or international poverty? As the two birds talked they watched the snowflakes fall, knowing they were safe. But gradually the snow builds up, one flake on another, and another and another and so on, until one more, small, almost weightless, snowflake landed, and the branch snaps off! It had been the action of one small, seemingly insignificant thing which eventually made the difference.

Poverty is not someone's else's fault, or someone else's problem, it is everyone's fault, everyone's problem, so everyone can help to change it. By our charity giving, by not wasting food, by caring, by praying, by lighting a candle (doing it to recognise we care even if we feel powerless), things can change. This parable of Jesus isn't just about feeding the hungry, giving a drink to the thirsty or releasing the prisoners, it is about caring for God's world, and God's people, caring if you like for Jesus our brother. And doing it not to seek reward, but because love is fulfilling the law – to love God and love our neighbour.

As we approach Christmas we will probably be bombarded again with charity requests, from home and abroad. We can't necessarily answer every appeal, we cannot afford to do everything we would like to do, but we can try and do something that will change lives. If we show the love of God by our deeds and words we don't just help someone but witness to our serving Jesus. But if we just shrug and pass on, thinking that what we do will not make any difference so why bother, then we will be guilty of not caring for others as if they are Jesus the King. Not treating another individual as the most important person we know should trouble our conscience. But each day we get another chance, another opportunity, who knows what it will be tomorrow: someone hungry, someone thirsty, someone lonely, someone who is trapped, someone who needs help. You (and me, and all of us) are needed, by them, by Jesus. What we do for the least important person we are doing for the most important too.