

Hailsham Methodist Church
Worship at Home
Sunday 22nd November 2020, 'Christ the King'

Call to Worship

Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
For you are the God of my salvation. (Psalm 25, v.4-5)

Hymn: Crown Him With Many Crowns (StF 347)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZ1UpdqDFCk>

Prayers of Thanksgiving & Confession

Loving heavenly Father, we thank you bringing us to this day. We give you thanks for the beauty of the autumn colours as the season changes. The blue sky days which lift our hearts and the many rainbows recently show us the glory of this world you created. Lord, we lift our hearts to you in praise and thanksgiving.

Gracious God, help us to start each day with prayers as we give thanks and ask you to guide us through this day. Guide us in our relationships both with family and friends. Open our hearts to forgive where there has been hurt. In this day we ask that no one will be hurt by us in thought, word or deed. Help us to use each day to find a way of sharing your love with those around us.

Gracious God, forgive us when we fall short of being the person you wish us to be. Forgive harsh words, short patience, unkind thoughts, shallowness in giving in so many different ways. Lord, shape us and mould us, fashion our steps as we walk this Christian journey, feeling the security of the ground beneath our feet as we walk a path that is planned by your will for our lives.

Old Testament Readings:

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

Psalm 95:1-7a

Hymn: Let All The World In Every Corner Sing (StF 57)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfXldoDnvq4>

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:31-46

Reflection:

"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." (v..40)

This passage comes at the end of a set of teachings from Jesus which began back in Matthew 24:3 when the disciples asked him, 'Tell us...what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?' Whilst often treated as a parable, it doesn't really fit into that category. Rather, Jesus uses an image people of Palestine would have been familiar with, to make a point. Sheep and goats would share pasture together, but, in the evening, the less hardy goats would need to be separated from the sheep so they could be sheltered.

With the title, 'Son of Man' and the image of all the nations gathering at this Son of Man's throne, the passage fits into Jewish apocalyptic literature, which uses picture language to imagine how God will bring about the kingdom of justice in all its fullness.

The question that puzzles many concerns exactly who are the members of Jesus' family mentioned here. One theory is that it refers to disciples of Jesus. When his family come to him (Matthew 12:46-50), Jesus says that whoever does the will of God is his brother and sister. The original readers of Matthew's gospel, who may well have been facing persecution, could have taken comfort that Jesus, the King of heaven, had noticed their suffering and those who

supported them. With many Christians around our world still suffering persecution, that comfort of King Jesus having noticed them may continue to strengthen them, and make this an appropriate reading for this Christ the King Sunday.

However, taking the sweep of all the gospels, we also see Jesus in solidarity with the poor and marginalised. It would therefore not be a wrong reading to see the reference to Jesus' brothers and sisters as referring to all who are hungry, in prison, etc.

We may be uncomfortable with the image of people being sent off into eternal punishment. If we are to welcome the image of eternal life that Jesus offers, though, it is hard not to accept the opposite that is included. A mistake the Church can fall into is forgetting that it is not our job to make those judgements about ourselves or others. Rather, it is Jesus who is the judge. In presenting Jesus as judge, we should not also forget the full image we get from across the gospels.

To Ponder:

Who are 'the least of these' in your view today, and in what ways could they be supported or encouraged?

How should the Church talk about these more pictorial passages in our more scientific and rational world?

To what extent should judgement feature in our faith?

Hymn: When I Needed A Neighbour Were You There (StF256)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfXldoDnvq4>

Prayers of Intersession

Gracious God, we pray for our world and ask that you will be with us in this time of disease and suffering. We pray for all who are sick, bereaved, and those for whom this is a lonely long road without friends and family nearby. We pray for all who care and serve those around them.

We pray for governments and leaders that good judgement will be the rule. We pray for our Queen and her family, giving thanks for her lifetime of service.

We pray for our own community, its churches and its people.

We pray for our own families and friends and ask that you will watch over them.

Gracious God, we ask forgiveness for our sins and come before you now in a time of quiet.

Gracious God, accept our prayers and help us to know the wideness of your merciful forgiveness when we open our hearts and minds in your loving presence. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

We pray as Jesus taught us: Our Father

Hymn: Rejoice, The Lord Is King (StF 335)

Blessing

May the one who makes all things new fill us with grace, hope, peace and joy, that together we may live and work to God's praise and glory in our world. Amen.

Reflection by Rev'd Will Fletcher, Haywards Heath Methodist Church, taken from 'A Word In Time', Methodist Church website

Prayers from Pam Cornish, and some taken from "The Earth Is The Lord's" – the Methodist Prayer Handbook, 2020/2021