

Moore Presbyterian Churches

November 21, 2021

Reign of Christ Sunday



<https://bigcatholics.blogspot.com/2018/01/well-written-icon-of-week-vol-1-our.html>

God calls us to worship

(Psalm 24, congregational response in bold type)

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it;
**for he has founded it on the seas,
and established it on the rivers.**

Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.

Who is the King of glory?

The Lord, strong and mighty,
the Lord, mighty in battle.

**Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.**

Who is this King of glory?

**The Lord of hosts,
he is the King of glory.**

We bring our praise and confession

Hallelujah to You Oh LORD our King,
You are robed in majesty
and girded with strength.
For establishing the world through Your decrees
which are very sure;

We praise Your name, O Lord our King

You are the God who is and who was and who is to come,
who reigns over all that come before Your throne,

We praise Your name, O Lord our King

Lord Jesus Christ, the Faithful Witness,
the Firstborn of the dead,
and ruler of all.
You put to right the wrongs against Your children,

We praise Your name, O Lord our King

For loving us and freeing us from our sins by Your blood,
and making us kingdom priests and priestesses
serving God our Sovereign,

To You be glory and dominion forever and ever

Jesus, You are the "Alpha and the Omega,"
the Almighty; rescuing widows, orphans, and those in bondage;
reigning in victory,
coming in the clouds.

To You be glory and dominion forever and ever.

Loving God on this day we celebrate Christ as King,
yet we fail to let Him reign in our lives, our thoughts and deeds.
We spout vain words – of worship, honour and adoration
while in His name we conquer, impose dominion and injustice,
To God be the glory we say, and Christ be our sovereign.
but we lash out in anger when others do not do as we say.
Imposing views on holiness, living the King's way;
and far too often we do not make time to pray.

On others we impose our own will, not Yours
especially on the weak, the poor, the vulnerable.
We design rules to satisfy ourselves, our wants, our desires
and in Jesus' name we declare some less human than others.

Lord we have wronged You, Forgive us we have sinned.
Help us begin again, to love again, to live again
the Faith we espouse, and to espouse the Faith that we live.

Caring for others, not counting the cost,
righting the wrongs that selfishness brings
Lord may our lives once again point the way

to You the Good Shepherd, and Your paths of Peace
where abuse is unheard of, and Jesus is King. ¹

God assures us of his mercy

Remember the promise Apostle Paul declares: “What will separate us from the love of Christ? Hardship? Distress? Peril or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through the God who loves us. Let us rejoice that, no matter what is happening around us, no matter what we have done, God’s deep love will never let us go.”²

We offer our lives and resources

Offering plates are positioned as you enter and leave the sanctuary. If you’d prefer to use e-transfers, please speak with Rev. Ian, Judy Armstrong (St. Andrew’s), or Howard McKellar)

Hymn: #290 “Immortal, invisible, God only wise”

God speaks to us through his Word

¹ <https://churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/weekly-worship/monthly/2021-november/21-november-christ-the-king>

² <https://presbyterian.ca/worship>

Christ, the King

The Christian church marks seasons by the seasons of the life of Christ. The year begins with waiting for his arrival. It then moves through his early years, his baptism, to his suffering and death on the cross. From there it moves to his resurrection with the Easter season, his Ascension, and then the arrival of the Holy Spirit. The year then moves into its longest season as we sit and reflect on the implications of Christ's life, death, resurrection, ascension, and the presence of the Holy Spirit before starting over with waiting. Next Sunday begins the season of waiting for Christ's arrival known as Advent.

Which means that today is the last Sunday of the Christian year. The Sunday designated "Christ the King" Sunday; or, "Reign of Christ" Sunday. Which, unfortunately is a confusing label for today because his actual ascension to the throne of heaven and earth is what we celebrate on Ascension Sunday.

In any event, today is Christ the King Sunday and the readings for today help us reflect on that metaphor.

- 1st reading: Daniel
 - Psalms → Proverbs → Ecclesiastes → Song of Songs → Isaiah → Jeremiah → Ezekiel → Daniel
 - Daniel recounting vision
 - throne-room scene
 - "Ancient of Days" on throne
 - surrounded by attendants
 - law books and record books opened
 - Ancient of Days: judgment on conduct and ministry of the kings of the nations, found to be wanting, possession of kingdom taken from them and given to someone who looked like a human being, "son of man"

READ: DANIEL 7:9-10, 13-14, 27
REVELATION 1:1-2, 4b-8
PSALM 11 (*Read responsively*)

I want to ask you a question, I want you to answer it for yourself as honestly as you can: How many of you are completely content and at peace with everything? You're confident that things are going to get better and better and that everything is okay?

How many of you are worried, even the slightest little bit, about international, global politics? About climate change? About local politics? About your health? About your family? About your children? About your parents?

How many of you hear about smog in Delhi that has shut the city down or the flooding in British Columbia (not to ignore the heat dome last summer), and that gives you a bit of a pang of panic?

How many of you worry that the COVID pandemic will never disappear? That it's with us forever?

Now, my next question is more _____-:

How many of you throughout the week, or day, or hour get overwhelmed by anxiety and panic?

If, in the privacy of your mind you raised your hand to any of these questions, you're not alone. I know that because I'm one of you.

There are a lot of reasons to be anxious if you look only at the issues.

Is it even possible in this day and age to experience peace in our hearts and minds? Peace in our souls? That doesn't mean that you don't get upset or worry about things, but that through it all, is it possible to have a sense of grounding? A sense of fitting into something that gives you the assurance that you can face another day? That the world is not going to hell in a handbasket?

In one of my sessions of private worship this week, I was led to Psalm 13 in which the psalmist asked the question: "How long must I wrestle with my thoughts, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? Consider and answer me, O Lord my God!"

Is it possible to know peace in our hearts and minds in spite of the chaos around us?

Scripture reassures us that, Yes, of course that is possible.

But that sense of deep peace that allows us to face the ups and downs and uncertainties with confidence and assurance is not going to come from the powers and principalities of this age. That sense of assurance and peace is not going to come from the governments nor the social organizations that deal with the issues of the age.

Peace that defies understanding, peace that defies logic, peace that transcends circumstances, comes from a different source.

Peace comes from a source that is so great, it doesn't change according to the issue of the day. A source that knows the beginning and knows the ending. A source that *is* the beginning, and *is* the ending.

This is the hope of the gospel. That Jesus of Nazareth who is the Son of God and the Messiah, is the source of this peace. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the one who has been from the beginning, is now, and will be through to the consummation of the marriage of heaven and earth. Jesus is the one who knows our issues, who knows what we're going through, and also transcends them. He is the one who faced on the cross, all the evil and chaos of which humanity and the malevolent spirits are capable, and defeated them. He freed us by his blood. He is the one who is the firstborn of the dead. The one who defeated the grave itself and has shown us in his resurrection what awaits all of God's children and all of God's creation at the marriage feast of heaven and earth.

Each of our readings came about in the context of political upheaval.

John received his revelation while he was imprisoned because his insistence that the triune God is sovereign over all and the Jesus the Christ of Nazareth is the eternal King was at odds with the desired ordering of society of the Empire – which at that time was the Roman empire.

Daniel received his revelation while living under the rule of the Babylonian empire and he looked forward to future empires which were each going to overpower and outdo the other: Babylon would fall to Media, which would fall to Persia, which would fall to Greece, which would fall to Rome.

In more recent history, we can look at the British Empire. While we still experience some of its influence and its legacy of course continues, most of us have little daily awareness of the monarchy. The empire has largely dissipated.

All human empires fall. They're temporary.

But the Triune God who revealed himself in Jesus, the one who is the Ancient of Days, has been from the beginning, is now, and will be through the ending to the culmination of all good things. And, in Jesus he shows that these empires, these pandemics, these issues are not unimportant, but they are momentary. There is a kingdom that transcends them.

So, if human systems for organizing society and organizing life are temporary and are not reliable for instilling within us a sense of grounded peace that allows us to face the chaos without succumbing to it, where can we turn?

Scripture asserts that Jesus of Nazareth, born of Mary while still in her virginity, crucified at Calvary, resurrected from the dead, and ascended sits on the throne of heaven at the right hand of the Ancient of Days. The Kingdom of heaven and earth has been given to him.

As much as we might want to flee like a bird to the mountains, we needn't do so, because the Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven. And His eyes behold the struggles of humankind.

And not only that, by God's grace, those who believe with their hearts and proclaim with their mouths that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, are themselves adopted children of God. Adopted siblings with Christ. And thus, partners with the King in governing earthly affairs as they are in heaven.

This carries implications for our relation with the natural world, for upholding ecological/climate justice. It carries implications for our relation with the cosmic world, for upholding cosmic justice. It carries implications for our relation with other people, for upholding Godly social justice. It carries implications for our relation with human governments, for how we vote, who we elect, which laws we support.

It also carries implications for our relation with our own self. With our inner realm of thoughts and emotions.

To proclaim that Christ is King is to proclaim that the power which Sin, Death, and the Devil wish to exert over our hearts and minds has been destroyed.

There are still things about which to worry.

But disciples of Jesus place those worries in the context of the kingship of the One who is the Alpha and the Omega. And from that solid ground, we face the issues of the day with confidence and a peace that is beyond all human understanding.

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come.

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 forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: #267 “Rejoice, the Lord is King”

We respond with thanksgiving and intercessions

(Congregational response in bold type)

“Lord, in your mercy,”

“Hear our prayer.”

Loving God,
It is such a blessing to be in Your presence
To offer our worship and praise
To listen to Your word
And to respond to You in the various ways You enable us to
And to know that wherever we are, You are with us
Receive our thanks.

Gracious God,
We thank You for the gift of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ
In whom we live and move and have our being
For the gift of life, of family, of friends
For our church community
And the many ways we connect with one another
We give You thanks.

Almighty God,
We thank You for the embrace of Your love
Your unfailing faithfulness and kindness
For Your care, protection, and provision
For the continuous assurance
That You are in control of this world
We thank you, Oh Lord.

Merciful God,
You know too well
That we worry and have fears
That sometimes doubts and apprehensions seem to overwhelm us
Often, our faith is little or there is none,
Yet you call us to come to You
Your ears are open to our prayers
Hear us now, O Lord

We pray for all who suffer
To all for whom this global pandemic is a daily nightmare
For the sick, for those who care for the sick.
For those whose jobs are affected

And who worry about the next meal or how to be safe
For those battling with loneliness and isolation.
Be our healer, our provider, and our abiding presence.

Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for all who continue to live with injustice
Whose lives are filled with violence and abuse
Those who face discrimination and are treated unfairly
Those who ask, how long before there is relief?
Those who are asked 'what did you do?' instead of 'how can we help!'
Grant that Your Spirit will move us to collective actions of love and care.

Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for those in authority
As they make tough response decisions concerning the COVID pandemic
As restriction rules become more complex
And political alliances threaten social action
And health care workers and health systems become over-stretched
Be our wisdom, our strength and guide.

Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for Your church,
Help us to find new ways of being a community
Where all are truly and honestly welcome
Where our liturgies do not leave out anyone
Where we are relevant to old and new generations
Make us Your disciples indeed.

Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for ourselves
Give us a heart that trusts You completely
Grant us grace to do what is right, to fight for justice, and to speak up for those
who cannot do so for themselves.
Give us thankful hearts
Heart that would see You in everyone, and welcome all as we would welcome You

Lord, help us to mirror You.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.³

Our Father...

God sends us with His blessing

³ <https://churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/weekly-worship/monthly/2021-november/21-november-christ-the-king#prayers>