

Christ the King Sunday



Gathering

Acknowledgement of country

On this Sunday while we proclaim the reign of God, we acknowledge the sovereign First Peoples of these lands and waters of the Gundungurra and Dharug Peoples. We pay our respects to their elders past and present and to all descendants of these Nations who have cared for this place since creation.

Call to Worship

The reign of God is not of this world, is a completely different reality, but it works when human society is moving toward justice, peace and love. May our worship remind us of this eternal, "otherworldly" Reign of God and enable us to open our hearts to receive it right here and now where we live.

Leader: Today is both the end and climax of the Christian year.
Today we celebrate the most beautiful truth that Christ is the King

The truth, grace and peace of Christ the King be with you all!
People: And also with you.

L: Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead,

P: The king above all kings on earth.

L: The one who loved us has freed us from our sins,

P: And has made us to be a kingdom, a beloved community in Christ.

L: We are now all priests to one another, serving God together,

P: To Christ be the glory and dominion forever, amen!

L: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God,

P: The one who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.

TiS 133 O worship the king (Vvs.1, 3,4 and 6)

O Worship the King all glorious above,
 O gratefully sing his power and his love:
 Our shield and defender, the ancient of days,
 Pavilioned in splendour and girded with praise.

The earth with its store of wonders untold,
 Almighty, your power has founded of old,
 Established it fast by a changeless decree,
 And round it has cast, like a mantle, the sea.

You bountiful care what tongue can recite?
 It breathes in the air, it shines in the light,
 It streams from the hills, descends to the plain,
 And sweetly distils in the dew and the rain.

O measureless might, ineffable love,
 While angels delight to hymn you above,
 The humbler creation, thought faltering their praise,
 With true adoration shall sing all their days.

CCLI Song # 808775

Robert Grant | William Croft

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Prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Leader: Almighty, Eternal and Holy God, who is, who was, and who is to come, worthy are you to receive our praise and thanksgiving. We gather to offer our praise to your holy Name. To you be glory and dominion forever.

People: Your revelation in Jesus Christ gives life to our bodies and souls. He has shown us the way to everlasting life and has promised to make us priests and a royal nation, but not in a place that we can see in the here-and-now. Still, we try to fit your ways into our expectations and then we grumble when you do not conform. Where we have doubted your wisdom and your truth, forgive us, good Lord.

L: Jesus was born to come into the world and bear witness to the truth. He has said that whoever is of the truth hears his voice. By the outpouring of your Holy Spirit equip us to bear witness to that same truth and so help others in hearing your voice.

P: On this day we await your coming in power and might to reclaim your Church and establish the reign of righteousness. In that same power we ask you to take into your care those whom we have named this day; relieve their O God, our Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, hear our prayers and in your mercy, answer them in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Ancient One, we confess to You that our vision is short-sighted.
 We see what is in front of us. We perceive only in short segments of time.
 We become busy with to-do lists and tasks.
 We worry and fret over the news that is in front of us one week, and forgotten the next.
 Forgive us for our short-sightedness and call us into the long view.
 Call us into dwelling in Your reign, which is eternal, and far beyond our imagination or understanding.
 Help us to know You are present with us now and always.
 In the name of Christ, who came to be with us, who is with us now, and who is coming again, we pray.

Word of Assurance

God is always present with us now, in this moment.
 Open your hearts, and receive God's love in Jesus Christ.
 Christ Jesus reconciled us with God so now we belong to God, and God is with you, now and always.

P: Thanks be to God!

TiS 390 Alleluia. (Vvs 1, 2 and 4)

Refrain

Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord,
 alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his name.

Jesus is Lord of all the earth;
 He is the king of creation. Refrain

Spread the good news o'er all the earth:
 Jesus has died and has risen . Refrain

God has proclaimed his gracious gift;
 new life for all! Alleluia Refrain

CCLI Song # 32376

Donald E. Fishel

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Scripture reading

Revelation 1: 4b- 8 Peggy Goldsmith
 John 18: 33-37 Barrie Tippins

Reflection “Christ the King, the Reign of Christ”

태정태세 문단세 여성연중 인명선 광인효현 속경영 정순헌철 고순

(Tae Jung Tae Sae Moon Dan Sae, Yae Sung Yeon Jung In Myung Sun,

Kwang In Hyo Hyun Sook Kyung Young Jeong Soon Hun Chul Ko Soon)

These are the names of 27 kings of the Lee Dynasty, the last kingdom of the Five thousand year Korean history.

If we have more time, I could tell you the names of the kings and queens of those kingdoms before the Lee dynasty!

We didn't understand why we had to memorise the names of 27 kings of the Lee Dynasty, except that we needed to know them for the history test, which often asked things like "What is the name of the king after Yae jong?"

Did you know that there are only 29 sovereign monarchs in the world today? Just in case someone ask you.

The idea of a "king or queen" is not an immediate reality to most of us, except we like to watch royal dramas and read the gossip about the royal family.

Today, in such a cultural setting, we celebrate Christ the King Sunday or 'Reign of Christ Sunday' as a more culturally appropriate term. This Sunday marks the end of the Christian calendar year, it seems most appropriate to celebrate 'Christ the King Sunday', summing up the Christian year by proclaiming Christ as the head of the Church and in whose reign we pledge to serve.

I saw Christians in Pakistan, a minority in the Islamic republic, decorating a Church and dressing in their best clothes to celebrate the day of Christ the King. On this day, the minority Christians looked to be the most prominent people in their society.

Christ, the King Sunday, was instituted in 1925 by Pope Pius 6th as a special feast honouring Christ as King in the world, calling for the bowing down of consumerism, nationalism, secularism and all sorts of worldly powers after the First World War. Pope Pius the 6th recognised that earthly empires and their influence simply pass and do not define who we are. And he envisioned a dominion by Jesus, King of peace. Jesus came to reconcile everything, surpass all our limits and boundaries, and liberate us from anything and everything that makes us less than what we are and who we are in God's creation intention.

So as we celebrate Christ the king Sunday, let us spend a time to reflect on our lives and faith as we conclude a year and in the light of Christ the King.

We might ask “ Have we lived this year faithfully, abiding by the rules and regulations of the reign of Christ?

Christians are often told that we must live as good law-abiding citizen within our faith practice.

Peter Wittington, who wrote 'Hope for Weary Churches' in 2003, challenged churches with a critical question, “What is the essential business of the Church?” In seeking an answer to this, we need to ask “What is the business of Christ?” If the Church is the embodiment of Christ's ministry and mission, the Church's business is nothing but the business of Christ?

According to the National Social Science Survey “Most Australians see the role of the Church as to teach people to be kind and considerate. Belonging to the Church in some way fits into the same category as belonging to Rotary.”

Peter pushed further, saying, 'Is it about providing friendship and care through various programs and activities?'

I would like us to discern together, sharing your experience, wisdom and vision.

Let me invite you to join together in our breakout room.

I've put together a few questions to kick off your conversation.

Breakout room

Q1. Share any intercultural/ bi-cultural experiences you've had.

Q2. What might it mean to live in the reign of God while we live in this world?

How can the Christian faith speak to our deepest longings?

Q3. To whom do you offer allegiance in your life? Who has the priority? Where is Jesus on this list?

Where is Christ in all this?

Today's gospel reading from the gospel of John gives us a harrowing interrogation Jesus faced with.

After being questioned by the high priest Jesus was brought to Pilate, the political ruler over Jews.

Pilate asked Jesus, 'Are you King of the Jews? In this question, Pilate humiliated the Jewish authorities, who fought against the power of the Roman occupiers and struggling with their powerlessness.

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*'.'

In this unashamedly bold statement, Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom of God does not belong to the power of the world. In this way, Jesus made it clear that the kingdom of God is ever powerfully present in the world and especially in his witness.

In the previous chapter in John's gospel, Jesus said, "I am the truth, the way and the truth and the life"(John 14: 6). Jesus embodies kingship, and he embodies God's reign in his life, ministry and primarily through his death and resurrection.

John, in his apocalyptic letter, described the image of King as the one enthroned in the Alpha and Omega, Christ the King is who is, who was and who is to come, ever-present from the past, present and future.

Our worldly leaders, whose interest is so often short-sighted and self-serving, often lead human society and our environment not into fulfilment but to destruction.

The decision of our leader at the COP26 disappointed us and the future of the earth.

It is ever apparent that the call of churches need to boldly proclaim the greatest truth that God loves the world and sends his only son so whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

Water Brueggemann described God as 'the world transforming, slave-liberating, covenant-making, promise-keeping and justice-commanding.'

And Jesus the servant king demonstrates this in his ministry, life and death and resurrection for all humanity.

So the business of the Church is crystal clear. The mission of the Church is about transformation, liberation, forming community, promoting integrity and working for justice in the world, reflecting God's mission in a broad way.

Let me conclude our reflection by sharing the poem of my favourite liturgist, John Van De Laar,

“The Unking”.

**We call you ‘King’, Jesus,
but you’re not like any king we’ve ever heard of;
You don’t flaunt your power,
waving your hand dismissively
to change the lives of your subjects;
You don’t hoard your wealth,
and tax your people just to grow more comfortable
in your isolated palace;
You don’t exploit the weak and unconnected,
or use the ambition of ladder-climbers
to further your control.**

**No, you are the King who lays down his crown,
to walk among us as one of us;
You are the King who lays down his life,
to bring abundant, eternal life to all who seek it;
You are the King who draws the weak, the rejected, the poor, the child
into the centre of the conversation
and into the heart of where real power lies.**

**You, Jesus, are the UnKing – the King whose Kingdom,
redefines everything we know
and will continue to do so for eternity. Amen.**

TiS 207 Jesus shall reign where'er the sun (Vvs. 1, 3, and 6)

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
 does its successive journeys run;
 his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
 till moons shall wax and wane no more.

People and realms of every tongue
 dwell on his love with sweetest song;
 and infant voices shall proclaim
 their early blessings on his name.

Let every creature rise and bring
 the highest honours to our King,
 angels descend with songs again,
 and earth repeat the long amen.

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Isaac Watts

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Prayer of offering

God of new life, out of the abundance of our lives
 we offer these gifts to you.
 Through your blessing and our willingness to share,
 may these offerings become a source for hope and love
 in this church family, and in the community beyond us,
 in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Announcement**Prayer of Intercession Perce Marland**

For years, I have been deeply distressed by the constant and on-going resort to violence in the world. What exacerbated that distress recently was hearing that 67 little children were killed in the recent Israeli/Palestinian conflict. What a tragic and senseless loss! In a world where humankind has created so many wonderful innovations and performed such wonderful feats, why haven't we found a way to put an end to wars and violence when the misery they cause is patently obvious? So today, I have designed our prayers to focus in part on seeking an end to violence at all levels - personal, local or national. Let us pray.

God of love, You who have urged us to love one another, we acknowledge that our world is in torment because of humankind's failure to heed your command to be compassionate and to live in love. We implore you to raise up leaders who are dedicated to peace and who will make a public vow never to use violence in the management of the world's affairs. Loving Lord, we pray that those who inflict pain and suffering on others might see the error of their ways, cease their senseless acts of violence and learn the transformative power of love. For the millions who are so traumatised by acts of violence, we pray that they might find relief in the ministrations of loving people and see and experience acts of love to blunt and blot out the pain of violence.

Loving Lord, we pray that our churches and church leaders will be so emboldened by the indisputable wisdom of Your direction to be loving, that they will seek to proclaim fearlessly that the world needs to follow Your way. A world that is not founded in love is a world destined for distress, the kind of distress that swathes of people are experiencing right now. We pray earnestly that all those who work for peace, whether they be in our churches or elsewhere, will find their efforts rewarded over and over again.

Merciful God, the world's peace has also been shattered by the COVID pandemic. People have lost loved ones, are struggling financially, have been separated from family members for months if not years and are living with untold stress. We pray for all those so suffering. May they find support and compassion so that their suffering might be relieved and their deep anguish become a thing of the past. In this battle against the pandemic, countless people – doctors, nurses, health staff and administrators - have been seeking to counter the effects of this dread disease. We ask that their wonderful services be acknowledged in meaningful ways and that they experience community plaudits that they so richly deserve. We acknowledge also that the COVID pandemic has blighted the study year of HSC students like Rosie. We pray that any obstacles to their academic progress be removed and that their study futures will not be impaired by the pandemic.

There are countless others for whom we also pray: the victims of natural disasters such as heat waves in Canada and the north-west of the US and the high-rise collapse in Miami, refugees seeking a better life, detainees such as the Biloela family who are enduring the impact of heartless officialdom, Australians who are sleeping rough and those, especially in our own community and congregation, enduring illness, pain and loneliness. Heavenly Father, we ask that they receive Your healing power and the blessings of care from their friends and community members.

Loving Lord, we are often so pre-occupied with our problems, that we fail to recognise the thousands who are Your agents of love. Amongst those are social service workers, counsellors, emergency workers and those committed to the welfare of others such as those who work at Junction 142. Make known to them our thanks for their service and how much we appreciate what they do. Shower them with your divine blessing, we pray.

Now let us join together in reciting the words of the Lord's prayer.

Closing song

All hail the power of Jesus' name

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vWF_lctSTo

or

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

Word of Mission and Blessing

As we follow Christ, we are called to embrace His agenda.

God's Reign is not "of this world" –

we need to constantly hold ourselves faithful to the service and sacrifice of Christ,
to the welcome and inclusivity of Christ, and to the love of Christ for all – even our enemies.

We relinquish the need to get our way all the time but committing to the serving and
sacrificial nature of God's Reign within our families, churches and neighbourhoods.

The grace of Christ Jesus be your only boast,

The love of God be your unfailing resource,

And the fellowship of the Spirit be your deepest joy.

Amen!