

22/11/20 Christ the King. Sunday next before Advent

Readings and Commentaries

Prayers

Collect

Eternal Father,
whose Son Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven
that he might rule over all things as Lord and King:
keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit
and in the bond of peace,
and bring the whole created order to worship at his feet;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen

God of compassion,
be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation.
In their loneliness, be their consolation;
in their anxiety, be their hope;
in their darkness, be their light;
through him who suffered alone on the cross,
but reigns with you in glory,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Preliminary Comments:

This Sunday is the 'Next Before Advent', it is also the Sunday when the Church recognises Jesus as 'Christ the King'. The lectionary for Morning Prayer has continued to move through the books of Daniel and Revelation this week. These books are full on metaphor and imagery that is sometime difficult to understand and some of it cannot be fully understood. However, both books slowly develop our understanding of the authority and power of Jesus Christ in heaven and on earth. Jesus is described and alluded to in many ways in these two scriptures, as the 'Son of Man', the 'Lamb of God', the 'Son of God' and the 'King of Kings', to name just a few. There is much teaching in church about Christ as our Saviour and Redeemer, his attributes of patients, love,

'Peace be with you'

I hope you are well.

These commentaries are not meant to be a sermon but hopefully a way to expand our engagement with the word of God.

I hope that as we navigate through the current restrictions on worship, we as a congregation will be able to open our hearts and minds to the message and truth contained in God's word.

Please continue to love your neighbour and pray for all those who are suffering at this testing time. Prayer cannot be quarantined. Our hope is in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.

Regards Revd M Orr

kindness, and forgiveness are well attested to, and it is right to do so. However, it should also be equally recognised that Jesus is our Lord and Judge and King of Kings, and his Kingdom will have no end. Jesus alluded to his coming Kingdom and His judgment many times in the gospels, John 5:27, 12:48, Matthew 19:28 are just a few examples.

The Grace of Christ comes equally with his Judgment, we have seen his grace displayed in the first advent through his birth, passion, death, and resurrection. In his second advent we will see his glory displayed through his righteousness, judgment, power, and wrath.

Ephesians 1:15-end

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love^[e] towards all the saints, and for this reason¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.¹⁷ I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him,¹⁸ so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints,¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.²⁰ God^[f] put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come.²² And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church,²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Commentary:

The typical letter from Paul starts with a 'eulogy' where God is praised for blessings received by Paul and his fellow Christians. Then follows the 'thanksgiving' which is concerned with the works of God in the lives of those Paul is addressing. This is where the passage starts in this reading.

Paul gives a prayer of intercession for the church in Ephesus, asking that they will be able to know God. He asks for wisdom and revelation so they can know the value of the hope God gives them. Paul emphasises that this hope comes from God almighty and connects Christ directly to the power of God. The words Paul uses show Christ's divinity and therefore reinforcing the Christian doctrine that Christ and God are one.

This passage is just the introduction to the letter, it sets the tone for its readers and helps them understand who Christ is and from whom their blessing flow and in whom their hope resides.

Matthew 25:31-end

'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory.³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats,³³ and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing?³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?"⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family,^[g] you did it to me."⁴¹ Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels;⁴² for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me."⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we

saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'

Commentary:

The context of Matthew 25 is the period between Jesus entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and his Last Supper with his disciples. This is the last major segment of Christ's teaching in the gospel of Matthew. Chapter 25 contains the parables of the 'wise and foolish maidens', the 'talents', and this one of the 'sheep and the goats.'

In last weeks' commentary we covered the parable of the 'Talents' in Matthew 25:14-30, in that parable we learned how one servant failed to make use of the talent his 'master' had given him and how the servant was judged and punished. In this passage we continue the theme of judgement. Although Jesus uses the format of a parable to convey the teaching, this 'parable' is slightly different. Jesus does not use a fictional character such as a 'rich man', a 'king' or a 'master', He portrays himself as the judge. Therefore, we must take this into account as we try to understand the teaching in the parable.

Jesus starts by assuring his disciples that he will come, in the future, with all his glory and sit on the glorious throne. Although at the time of this address Jesus is fulfilling the suffering servant role of the Messiah he indicates that in the future he will come in all his power, with the host of angels, and take up his Kingly place on the glorious throne. All the nations in the world will be under his authority. Here he is predicting his role as the liberating, conquering Messiah, and as ruler of all he will dispense justice.

Like the shepherd he will separate the sheep from the goats. Sheep and goats are similar in many ways; however, sheep tend to be obedient to the right shepherd and goats tend to be stubborn and unruly. Jesus is depicted in scripture as the 'good shepherd', and he said 'My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me'. (John 10:27). Jesus is indicating that his followers, those who obey him, will be separated from all the rest when he returns and there is a special place prepared for them.

In verses 35-40, Jesus talks about the corporal works of mercy his followers have done. These acts of mercy are manifest due to the followers' relationship with Christ, the source of love and compassion. By these acts of mercy Christians glorify Christ not themselves.

Verses 41-46 show what is in store for those who are not followers of Christ. They will endure eternal punishment, 'but the righteous into eternal life.'

There is much more valuable teaching to come from this passage of scripture. This passage alludes to the second coming of Christ, the second Advent, Kingship of Christ, his authority to judge and punish. It also gives his followers the assurance of salvation.

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

John Newton (1779)

1 How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
in a believer's ear!

It soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds,
and drives away our fear.

2 It makes the wounded spirit whole
and calms the troubled breast;
'tis manna to the hungry soul,
and to the weary, rest.

3 O Jesus, shepherd, guardian, friend,
my Prophet, Priest, and King,
my Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
accept the praise I bring.

4 How weak the effort of my heart,
how cold my warmest thought;
but when I see you as you are,
I'll praise you as I ought.

5 Till then I would your love proclaim
with every fleeting breath;
and may the music of your name
refresh my soul in death.