

twelvebaskets



SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT B

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

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Sunday Before Advent - Year B
24th November 2024



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

44 STF – Come on and celebrate OR

77 STF – Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

134 STF – Christ, whose glory fills the skies OR

177 STF – Lo, he comes with clouds descending

Readings: 2 Samuel 23:1-7; Psalm 132:1-12; Revelation 1:4b-8; John 18:33-37

Hymn:

318 STF – Christ, our King before creation OR

185 STF – Sing we the king who is coming to reign

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

251 STF – Jesus Christ is Waiting OR

342 STF – All hail the power of Jesu's name!

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

487 STF – You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace OR

358 STF – Let earth and heaven agree

Blessing

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Call to worship

Gracious God,
Your love has called us here,
And we have come – to gather in your name,
To learn of your love,
To reflect and grow with you.
To come to know something of your call on our lives.
May we listen, learn, sing, share and pray by the power of your Spirit today
Amen.¹

Hymn:

44 STF – Come on and celebrate OR

77 STF – Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King

Opening Prayers

Today's opening prayer is a call and response. After each sentence from the leader, please join in with:

May we know that your love for us flows through our veins and beats as a constant within our hearts.

Loving God,

As we come to worship today, help us to quieten our minds and listen to our senses.

May we know that your love for us flows through our veins and beats as a constant within our hearts.

May our eyes be open to the truth of your love so that we see ourselves and those around us as if seeing through your eyes.

May we know that your love for us flows through our veins and beats as a constant within our hearts.

May our ears be open to the truth of your message so that we hear your wisdom and know it deep inside.

May we know that your love for us flows through our veins and beats as a constant within our hearts.

May our mind be free of untruths about our own unworthiness or lies about not being good enough.

May we know that your love for us flows through our veins and beats as a constant within our hearts.

May our voices sing the truth of you as we bring them together this day.

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

May we know that your love for us flows through our veins and beats as a constant within our hearts.

Let us come with all of ourselves to worship you today and everyday. Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

I want to start with a question.

What comes to mind when you think of a king or queen?

Today, we will talk about a different kind of king — Jesus! But Jesus' kingdom isn't like what we normally imagine when we think of kings and queens. Let's see what happened when Jesus was brought before Pilate, the Roman governor.

We see a couple of things happen in the story. Pilate asks Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Pilate is confused because Jesus doesn't look like a regular king. He doesn't have fancy robes, a crown, or soldiers around him.

Also, Jesus responds by saying his kingdom is not of this world. If it were, his followers would have fought to stop him from being captured. But Jesus says his kingdom is different — it's about truth and love, not power and armies.

So, what does it mean for us to follow King Jesus?

Well, firstly, it's about loving others. Jesus' kingdom is about love, so we are called to love others, especially those who need our kindness the most. Maybe at school, college, or work, you have people who aren't always the kindest. Despite that, following King Jesus' way looks like being kind to those types of people.

Secondly, it's about telling the truth. Jesus said he came to show the truth. He could have easily tried to lie his way out of that terrible situation he was in. Instead, he chose to tell the truth, despite what might happen to Him. This means we should live truthfully — not just by being honest with our words, but by living in a way that reflects Jesus' truth and love.

Jesus is the King of a kingdom that's full of love, peace, and truth. His kingdom is different from the world's because he invites everyone to follow him and be part of something bigger — a kingdom where we show God's love to everyone. Why not have a go yourself this week?³

Hymn:

134 STF – Christ, whose glory fills the skies OR

177 STF – Lo, he comes with clouds descending

Readings: 2 Samuel 23:1-7; Psalm 132:1-12; Revelation 1:4b-8; John 18:33-37

² Opening prayers written by Hannah Baker

³ All Age Talk written by Matthew Forsyth

Hymn:

318 STF – Christ, our King before creation OR

185 STF – Sing we the king who is coming to reign

Reflections on the readings

What if God was one of us?

Just a slob like one of us

Just a stranger on the bus

Tryin' to make his way home?

“One of Us” by Joan Osbourne (written by Eric Bazilian)

I remember some years ago I went to lead worship at a church I had never been to before. I had had all the necessary conversations with the stewards beforehand and all was set. I walked in the church, said good morning to the first person I saw, and sort of ambled in to the body of the church. A few moments passed, then a woman came up to me and gave me a cautious greeting and asked if I was just visiting. I gently informed her I had come to lead the service when she flushed with embarrassment and blurted out “Oh... normally the preacher wears a tie”. It was obviously tense, but we overcame our tension and all was well. Incidentally, I have a lovely relationship with the people in that church and have shared some lovely services with them since. I still don't wear a tie though...

This has since reminded me of those “Undercover Boss” type of programmes when CEO's of large corporations dress up and get jobs on the shop floor of their organisations – and find out some home truths along the way.

Today is “Reign of Christ Sunday” and I have a question for us to ponder:

How does Jesus reign as King today? [Break into small groups to have a conversation, or ask people to reflect directly, and take some thoughts and responses from the congregation.]

Our readings today all point us towards this concept of the kingdom and what that might mean.

Daniel's description of his vision is grand, and theatrical, and noisy, and fiery... and we see God's great commissioning of Jesus as King. We can only imagine the drama of the soundtrack that must have accompanied this vision in his mind!

The Psalmist in Psalm 93 also conveys the “bigness” of this with grand talk of floods and thunder underlining the grandeur and scale of this kingship.

I was reminded of some of the memes that appeared on social media following the coronation of King Charles where he looked so absolutely weighed down by all the heavy robes and gold adornments, and with a look on his face that seemed to share my instinctive thought... “is this all really necessary?”

For all the theatre and noise, both readings give us a sense of the forever nature of this concept... the Psalmist assures us this king and kingdom are “everlasting” and “forevermore”, and the beautiful words at the end of the extract from Daniel talks gently but assuredly of an everlasting dominion, one which will never be destroyed.

It is these aspects, far more than the accompanying drama, that reach out to us... because we sit here today trying to wrestle with just what this kingdom is here in the time following these proclamations of forever... we are right here in the here and now.

So – here in this 21st century... how does that “everlasting” stuff play out for us?

How does Jesus reign as King today?

Let's think about the "kingdom" to which this refers.

The dictionary definition of kingdom is "a realm in which God's will is fulfilled" So... what is the will of God?

The "will" of this God – through the example of Jesus – is clear. He taught about and campaigned for a world where the outcast was welcomed, the stranger was loved, the marginalised were embraced in the mainstream, the poor would know security, the hungry would be fed... and so on, and so on...

It's pretty clear what his will is.

So as we look out into the world I'm sure we will see instances where this will is played out very well... but at the same time we see situations close to home and across the globe where there is clearly a huge gap between reality and this "will of God".

So again we ask:

How does Jesus reign as King today?

Are we waiting for him to "come again" and sort it all out for us?

Maybe WE have a role to play?

I think maybe our King needs our help.

We can't wait around for theatre... As long as we do that the opportunities for us to bring this kingdom to life go begging before our very eyes.

It's up to us. Now.

How does Jesus reign as King today?

There are more clues to be had in the prayer we share so regularly, the Lord's Prayer.

If we simply reorder it a little we get the following "sections"

1. GOD

Our Father, which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name;
Thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
For ever and ever.
Amen.

2. OTHERS – the Golden Rule

Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against us;

3. ME

And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil;

4. NOW!!!

Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done
in earth, as it is in heaven:

This prayer is an acknowledgement of exactly what this king is all about – exactly what the kingdom will feel like:

- an appreciation of God at the centre of everything
- a first thought for others
- an energising of ourselves to play our part, and
- a call to get on with it. Now.

So what if God WAS one of us, just a stranger on a bus, trying to make his way home?

We will shortly sing the John Bell hymn “Jesus Christ is Waiting”. It is so beautiful, and for me it captures the real essence of the fact that Jesus is alive and well among us, is around us, is within all of us as we go about our daily lives. That doesn’t need definition, it simply needs humble submission, acceptance and openness. As we make our way through the song we make some sense of the kind of encounters we have may have in our lives:

Hold a discussion about this and ask the congregation to think of times and situations where we may find Jesus amongst us in each of the following areas:

- Jesus is waiting in the streets (poverty, hunger, strangers)
- Jesus is raging in the streets (injustice)
- Jesus is healing in the streets (reaching out to others)
- Jesus is dancing in the streets (energy and excitement)
- Jesus is calling in the streets (He needs us!)

In the Gospel reading today, Jesus says his kingdom is “not of this world”.

I think here he is guiding us to not expect God’s kingdom to feel like an earthly Kingdom – with all its adulation, finery and inequality.

Instead Jesus lives and calls from “among us”, inviting us in, calling us forward to be a part of the reshaping of the world in which we live until we see more of his will fulfilled.

Our King is reigning among us. Here and now. Let us approach...

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

251 STF – Jesus Christ is Waiting OR

342 STF – All hail the power of Jesu’s name!

[Please note – 251 Jesus Christ is Waiting is recommended for use at this point as it is referenced in the prayers of intercession. If you make an alternative choice of hymn, just update the wording in the prayer to reflect that.]

Prayers of intercession

Continuing the theme of the hymn “Jesus Christ is Waiting”, let us pray: *(use the following words as prompts, leaving silences in between, and using the repeating prayer after each section)*

As we interact with our neighbours struggling in poverty, as we choose to be either friend or stranger in those situations... bring your own prayers in the quiet. *[Silence]*

⁴ Reflection written by Kevin Dobson

Lord, help us to know that you are there with us, and help us to be open to what we are being called to do.

As we feel ourselves getting angry at the latest news headline about oppression and injustice, as we feel angry about the distance we feel from the sense of Kingdom values in the world... *[Silence]*

Lord, help us to know that you are there with us, and help us to be open to what we are being called to do.

As we reach out to connect with those we know - and those we don't - and our reaching out brings calm... and also when WE receive a friendly loving touch or word from another... *[Silence]*

Lord, help us to know that you are there with us, and help us to be open to what we are being called to do.

As we feel part of movements that bring about change, and when WE dance – both in anger and in joy... *[Silence]*

Lord, help us to know that you are there with us, and help us to be open to what we are being called to do.

As every hint within us reminds us we are part of something bigger, something good, something that is drawing us forward into a better world... and as we try to dare to say “yes”,

Lord, help us to know that you are there with us, and help us to be open to what we are being called to do.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

This is our moment, to say thank you, to return the gifts we have been blessed with, to you. So accept these simple gifts, Lord, and may they be used for justice, joy and peace, here in this community and beyond, in Jesus' name

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

487 STF – You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace OR

358 STF – Let earth and heaven agree

Blessing

Let us go from this place,

With joy in our hearts, with peace in our souls, and with the hope that comes from our faith in a story where love wins.

Let us go out and meet with you, living, loving God, at work in our world,

Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Kevin Dobson

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker