Worship at Home

22nd November - Rachel Mitchell

Devon Moor to Shore Circuit



Today as we come consciously into the presence of our risen Lord, we are reminded of his Kingship and what that means for us his people.

The Psalmist writes:

O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

For the Lord is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.
In his hand are the depths of the earth;
the heights of the mountains are his also.
The sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land,
which his hands have formed.

O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. (Psalm 95: 1-7a)

STF 24: Come, now is the time to worship

Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship.
Come, just as you are before your God, come.

One day every tongue will confess you are God,
one day every knee will bow.
Still, the greatest treasure remains
for those who gladly choose you now.

Come, now is the time….

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Together we pray:

Almighty God, we come to you today with hearts that sing with gratitude and even joy as we give thanks for the Kingship of Jesus over all the world and over us. In Him, our Lord and Saviour, we see your justice, love, power and mercy made visible to us and to all the world, and we look forward to the day when everyone will indeed confess Jesus as God and bow the knee to him, both humbly and reverently.

As we look on him, as we remember the care he showed to those who sought him out, and the example he gave to us of how we should love each other, we recognise that we have not always lived as he asked – and may even have lost sight of what it means to fully live in his kingdom.

Forgive us Lord, for the times when we have not honoured your Kingship by the way we live, and so have hurt our neighbours, your world, and our Christian brothers and sisters too. Forgive us for listening to the voices that call us away from your side, and help us to hear your voice again, calling us back to you, calling us to acknowledge and welcome all it means for you to be enthroned not only in the heavens, but also in us, as the true king of our hearts.

King Jesus, bless us with a deep awareness of your presence with us as we spend time with you today, for we come with hearts ready to enthrone you anew, and ready to walk again where you lead us, along your paths of justice, mercy and love. **Amen**.

The Lord's Prayer

Read: Matthew 25: 31-46 *(from v31, abridged)*

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. *For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'*

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or ……

*The King will reply, '**Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.**'*

*Then he will say to those on his left 'Depart from me, you who are cursed... For when I was hungry you gave me nothing to eat …. Truly I tell you, **whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'***

Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Reflect

This is a very well-known parable in which Jesus talks of a future time when Christ's judgement will be seen throughout the world. Yet even as we read the story (which I have shortened above) I wonder how we feel about it. Does it fill us with assurance and hope that in the end all will be well, even though at the current time it is not - or does it make us feel uncomfortable?

Some might say ***"Finally, the time of justice is here."***

How we respond to this statement may depend on how much we have longed for this time to come. For us in our relatively safe and law-abiding country, it can be easy to take justice for granted. This is especially true for those of us who have never

experienced being unfairly treated in ways that have left us deeply scarred or in desperate need.

Yet all across our world so many people long for justice, and while their need is seen and heeded by some, full justice seems as far away today as it has been throughout history. If only there was someone who could change the world order and make it fair…

So, for them and for many others, the vision of Jesus coming as an all-conquering king bringing true justice is something that is truly longed for. He brings the offer of hope and light shining out in otherwise dark and hopeless situations. The hope here is not just of another temporary regime change, but of Jesus' righteous and eternal justice. The Son of Man (who we equate to Jesus) comes with power but also as a loving caring shepherd - and He draws *everyone* to him. No-one will escape or evade his justice.

Jesus then separates those he must judge into two groups. But he does not judge by the circumstances anyone finds themselves in – there is no "so you had it bad – you must come in." He judges by how people responded to the need of others, and particularly to the need of those he sees as family.

Who then are these brothers and sisters of Christ? Is this Jesus identifying himself with the down-trodden of the world, or is this a reference to Jesus' own followers, who by the time the story was recorded were being imprisoned and persecuted? Both groups have been treated unjustly and both can find hope and encouragement in knowing Jesus brings justice. Maybe this gives us encouragement and hope too?

Yet for many reading this story it is another group they find themselves associating with - the sheep and the goats. We find that we want to be counted as sheep; those that Jesus invites to come and abide in God's Kingdom, but maybe we feel a bit unsure about whether we have actually lived up to all he asks.

Yet we do not need to be unsure. If we truly desire to be counted as His sheep, we have another way into Christ's kingdom, which does not ask that we wait until Jesus comes in judgement. We can be citizens of Jesus' kingdom right now by accepting and affirming Him as our Saviour, and king over all we are today.

This is not just about words, but also about belief, trust, actions and loyalty. Are we ready to give him our oath (as he has given his oath to all who believe in him) and walk the path before us as his people, not for our glory but for his – wherever that may lead?

I wonder, how would you answer the question that asks "are you already abiding under Jesus' Kingship?"

My hope is that you will answer "Yes, I am – praise be to God who has made this possible!" **Amen**.

STF 333: Majesty, worship His Majesty

Majesty, worship His majesty,
unto Jesus be glory, honour and praise.
Majesty, kingdom authority, flows from his throne
unto his own, his anthem raise.
So exalt, lift up on high the name of Jesus,
magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus the King.
Majesty, worship His majesty,
Jesus who died, now glorified, King of all kings.

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A time of prayer

Lord Jesus, as we approach the season when we celebrate your birth, we remember how you gave up your kingship and came to live among us as one of us; and thank you that you came to save us rather than condemn us. Remind us again of your gracious promise to all who will receive you, that they will become your brothers and sisters, children of God, and live eternally in your kingdom.

Today, as we look across the world you made and love so dearly, we see so many in need of you, and so, we bring to you our prayers for others. We pray for:

Your church, praying particularly for those who are disadvantaged, imprisoned or persecuted because they follow You as Lord and Saviour.

Those who will go hungry or thirsty today. Those who don't have the means to feed themselves or their children wherever they may be.

The leaders of nations – that they may recognise injustice wherever it is found and use their power to bring help to those who cannot help themselves.

Charities like Christian Aid, which is doing what it can to raise awareness of need and injustice, and to help those in need, all in your name.

Those affected by the stories in the news, knowing that you see them, and that your heart breaks with each act of violence, selfishness, or greed.

Those we know who need our prayers today, that you will be close to them, bless them, and meet them at their points of deepest need.

We thank you Lord that you hear all the prayers we lift to you in Jesus' mighty name. **Amen.**

STF 481: The Lord's my Shepherd

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
he makes me lie in pastures green,
he leads me by the still, still waters,
his goodness restores my soul.

And I will trust in You alone,
and I will trust in You alone,
for Your endless mercy follows me,
your goodness will lead me home.

He guides my ways in righteousness,
and He anoints my head with oil;
and my cup - it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights. ***And I will trust...***

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
for you are with me, and your rod and staff
are the comfort I need to know. ***And I will trust...***

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Blessing

May the blessing of God the Father, Christ the risen King, and God the Holy Spirit be with you, protect and inspire you, and fill you with God's peace, today and for evermore. **Amen.**

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