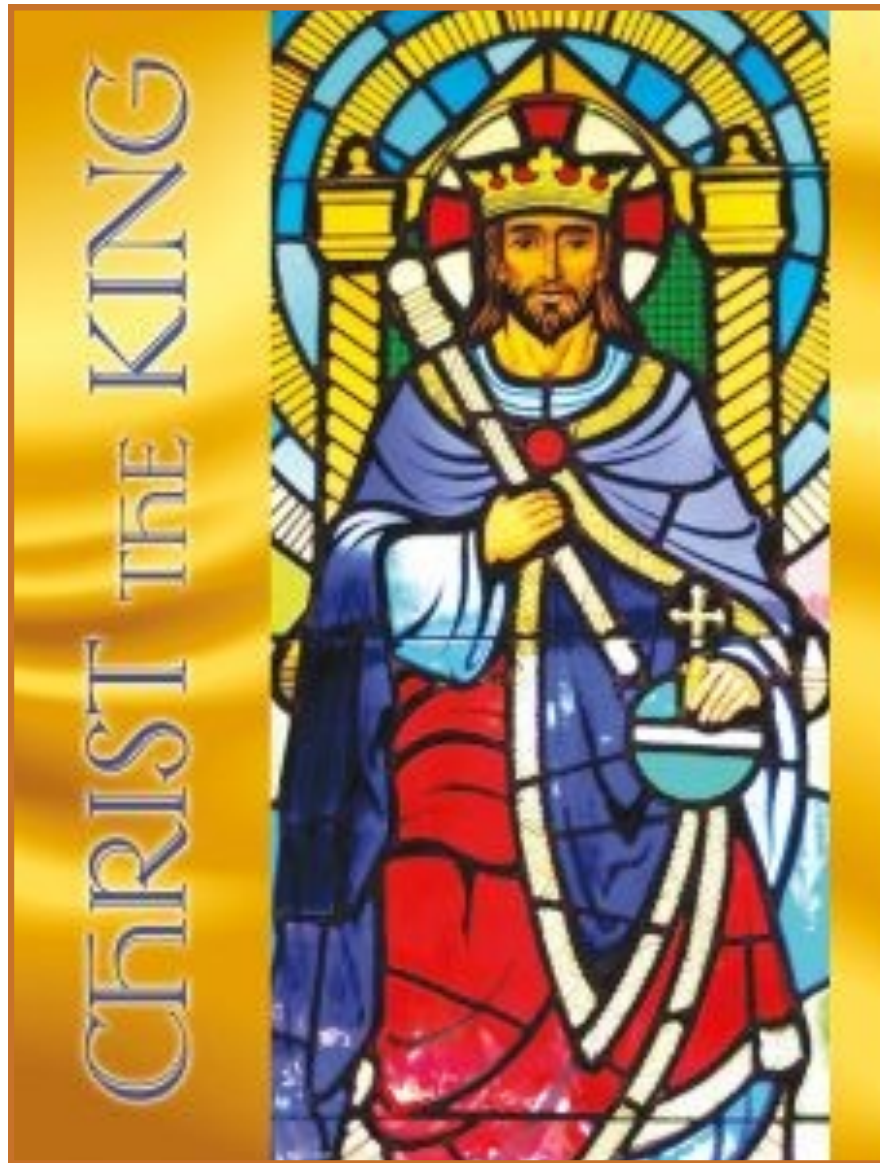


The Last Sunday after Pentecost



November 22, 2020
10:30AM

We Gather

Instructions for standing, sitting, and kneeling are rubrics from the Book of Common Prayer. Any person who is unable to stand or kneel is welcome to sit for any part of the service regardless of the printed instruction. Please feel comfortable using any posture you wish.

Processional Hymn:

Come People Of The Risen King

Please stand as you are able.

Introduction:

Please be seated.

Celebrant: Welcome to all of you good people here in-person and to everyone online today. We observe today as the last Sunday of the season of Pentecost. Next week, Advent begins marking a new church year. Today, we observe a relatively modern feast called Christ the King which was initiated by Pope Pius XI in 1925. It is helpful to understand why he inserted this date on the calendar.

In those days after the Great War, WWI, dictators rose up in Europe who led people away from the church and turned peoples' devotions and hopes towards a politician. The pope instituted this feast to remind the politicians that the church has the right to freedom and immunity from the state, and to improve secular respect for the church and to remind the faithful that Jesus is the king for everyone.

Anglicans and Episcopalians have observed this feast day only since 1969, but there is more. Our brothers and sisters in the Church of England today read an old collect prayer beginning with the words "Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy people ..." Because of this, this Sunday before Advent begins is known in England as "Stir up" Sunday where they make Christmas pudding, always stirring clockwise. In our lectionary, we will have to wait until the third Sunday of Advent for that stirring encouragement. Would anyone like to make some figgy pudding between now and then?

Opening Acclamation / Call to Worship

Please stand as you are able.

Celebrant: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

People: **And blessed be His kingdom, now and for ever. Amen**

Collect for Purity

Celebrant: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Song of Praise:

Gloria

Please remain standing.

Collect of the day

Please be seated.

Celebrant: Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

We Hear God's Word

First Lesson: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

Please remain seated.

Reader: A reading from the book of Ezekiel.

Thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the

lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.

Reader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 100

Reader: Be joyful in the LORD, all you lands; *

People: **serve the LORD with gladness and come before his presence with a song.**

Reader: Know this: The LORD himself is God; *

People: **he himself has made us, and we are his; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.**

Reader: Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise; *

People: **give thanks to him and call upon his Name.**

Reader: For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; *

People: **and his faithfulness endures from age to age.**

Second Lesson: Ephesians 1:15-23

Reader: A reading from the first book of Ephesians

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. 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, 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, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God 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, 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. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Reader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Gradual Hymn:

O Worship The King

Please stand as you are able.

Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46

Please remain standing as you are able.

Reader: The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

People: **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

Jesus said, "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. 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, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 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; 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, 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.' 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? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' 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, you did it to me.' 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; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 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.' 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?' 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.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Reader: Alleluia! Alleluia! Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people and kindle in them the fire of your love.

People: **Thanks be to God! Alleluia, Alleluia.**

Celebrate: May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, oh Lord my rock and Redeemer.

Sermon: *The Rev. Bob Wickizer*

Please be seated.

Which is your king?

Today is the last Sunday of Pentecost. In 1925, Pope Pius declared this Sunday to be "Christ the King" Sunday and Anglicans and Lutherans have celebrated the date along with the Roman Catholics ever since. Thankfully we are completing the set of Matthew's end of time judgement readings. I assure that we will not take the traditional view focusing on sheep, goats, your sinfulness and why you should avoid going to hell for eternity.

Today we are going to work backwards by starting with the very last two words of the gospel, ζωὴν αἰώνιον translated as "life eternal" or life of the ages or a whole life NOW full of vitality. It is a finite life. There are scholarly books written about that one word, αἰώνιον, and what it meant to the first century Jewish audience of Matthew who were immersed in a Greek culture. There is an equal volume of scholarship that tells us the word does NOT mean life after death, living for eternity or going to heaven. It is about living a full life NOW. It is about salvation in the literal sense of wholeness. In fact, the sweet, warm wine drink served this time of year is called "wassail" from the Anglo-Saxon toast "wes hol" or "may you be made whole." The righteous who enter into eternal life are enabled to live life fully right now – they are whole.

Are you with me on these two words? Because we will wrap back around to this in the end.

Our second odd point of departure is not the end of the gospel, but Palm Sunday. One thing that has bothered me about Palm Sunday and Holy Week since before I went to seminary is the schizophrenia. On Palm Sunday, Jesus comes in through the Jerusalem east gate as kings did for centuries before. People are happy, they are cheering, they are excited to see their new king coming before them. I remind you that the Greek word "christ," and the Hebrew word "messiah" mean "the anointed one" or the title for a king. Jesus, king of the Jews rides into Jerusalem humbly sitting side saddle on a donkey.

The mood of the crowd switches abruptly a few days later on Good Friday from cheering the Sunday before to jeering on Friday. They release Barabbas and call for the execution of Jesus. I have always wondered what could explain this abrupt 180 degree turn around of the emotions of the crowd.

The standard approach to this problem is to do nothing. Just accept what happens and don't ask too many questions. I found an interesting alternate explanation a few years ago that has Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem happening in the fall. Jesus is arrested and spends six months in prison. This gives the crowds time to forget about his exciting entry and get ready for a grisly execution.

But today, I have come back full circle. Neither approach is satisfying so I wonder if events really did unfold in just one week from Palm Sunday to Easter. The way it works involves the kind of king the crowd was expecting. Remember that this weeklong festival of the Passover takes place under Roman military occupation the reminders of their presence can be seen on every street corner.

What kind of a king was the crowd expecting that day? Taxation was oppressive. The slightest hint of any rebellion was met with overwhelming violence. The Jews hated the Romans. They wanted the Romans thrown out by force. The only leader in their history who had served as a hero military conqueror was David a thousand years earlier. As in David's day, this time the Jews wanted a military leader who would organize the Jews and give the Romans a taste of their own violence.

What kind of king was Jesus who rode through the east gate side saddle on a donkey that day around 32 AD? The crowd cheered and spread palms and garments before him as Isaiah prophesied. The crowd was thinking, "Finally, here was someone who would drive out the Romans." But the temple

priests wanted to get rid of Jesus. He turned over the moneychangers' tables. He was a threat to their lucrative income. Charges of insurrection and blasphemy are brought to the governor. The trial proceeds quickly and the crowd grows angrier and more surly by the minute.

Unlike David and military heroes, Jesus taught nonviolence. Turn the other cheek, walk the extra mile, love your enemies. The crowd realizes that this Jesus whom they thought would be their king and drive out the Romans, turns out to be a wimpy pacifist. As he is mocked, scourged, flogged, and crucified, the crowd's disappointment turns to approval and eventually, anger. Jesus was just not the king they wanted.

Life with a king who rules with military might and political games is an uneasy peace. The stability of the state and the happiness of the people lurch from crisis to crisis. People are on edge because they are in a state of constant uncertainty, anxiety, and fear. This is the exact opposite of what Jesus meant by the righteous will have eternal life.

Jesus, whom we crucified, gives us a better example of living a full life out of compassion and love. Jesus stands in line with the Jewish prophets and teachers stretching back 1500 years. In that tradition, the goal of a faithful life is to be righteous. The righteous person gives to others out of compassion. The righteous person hungers for justice on behalf of those oppressed by an often-violent system. The righteous person welcomes the foreigner, visits the sick, cares for the elderly and the children, visits the prisoner and does not judge others. The righteous person will live a full, wholesome life today and in the end, the world will be a better place and they will rest from their labors.

Silence for reflection after the sermon

Nicene Creed

All in unison; Please stand as you are able.

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life who proceeds from the Father. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Please kneel, sit or stand.

Reader: As we have offered gratitude for God's grace upon this community, let us now offer our gifts to the Lord, trusting that by the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be led to ever more faithful fellowship and service.

Reader: For peace from things that separate us from one another and for our salvation.

People: **Lord, have mercy.**

Reader: For the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the holy churches of God, especially...

People: **Diocesan Center and Staff; Diocese of Virginia; St. James' Church, Delhi.**

Reader: For this holy gathering and for those who enter with faith, reverence, and fear of God.

People: **Lord, have mercy.**

Reader: For...

People: **Michael, our Presiding Bishop; Poulson, our Bishop; Bob and Tom, our clergy; Tim & Jennifer, our wardens; vestry, delegates, and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God. Lord, have mercy.**

Reader: For the world and its leaders, our nation and its people. We pray for our leaders, especially...

People: **Donald, our President; Mike, our Vice-president; Markwayne, our Congressman; James**

& Jim, our Senators; Kevin, our Governor; and Marlon, our Mayor. Lord, have mercy.

Reader: For prisoners, the oppressed, all those in need or suffering, especially...

People: **Barbara & Family, Blackwell Family, Brad, Brewer Family, James & Shirley, Judy, Sherri, Bea, Eathen, Linda, John, Angie, Brian, Glen, Dante, Marilyn, Gary, Ann, Connie, Jan, Thomas, Cedric, Mary-Margaret, Jean, Barry, Cliff, Gabriella all those affected by the pandemic, and those whose suffering is known only to God.**

Reader: We pray for those in the armed services. We pray for those who have died (*especially...*)

People: **Lord, have mercy.**

Reader: For ourselves, our families, and those we love. We pray for those in our parish, especially ...

People: **Bailey, Leathia, Maddie, Rebecca, Alex.**

Reader: Also those who are traveling, (*especially...*)

People: **Lord, have mercy.**

Reader: Bless all those everywhere who give themselves to the service of others; that with wisdom, patience, and courage, they may minister to the suffering, the friendless, and the needy for love of him who laid down his life for us.

People: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Reader: Remembering our most blessed Mary and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

People: **To you, O Lord.**

Reader: Heavenly Father, you have promised to hear what we ask in the Name of your Son: accept and fulfill our petitions, we pray, not as we ask in our ignorance, nor as we deserve in our sinfulness, but as you know and love us in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

People: **Amen.**

Confession and Absolution

Please kneel, sit or stand.

Celebrant: Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Silence may be kept.

Celebrant and People:

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Celebrant: Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

Peace

Please stand as you are able.

Celebrant: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Greet one another in the name of Christ.

Announcements; Anniversary and Birthday Blessings

Offertory

Offertory Sentence: Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God. *Ephesians 5:2*

Offertory Hymn: *King Of Kings*

Doxology: *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*

Please stand as you are able.

The Great Thanksgiving

Sursum Corda

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.
People: **And also with you**
Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.
People: **We lift them to the Lord**
Celebrant: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
People: **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

Sanctus: *Holy God*

Please stand, sit, or kneel.

Lord's Prayer:

Celebrant: And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray:
Celebrant and People: **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Fraction Anthem: *Lamb of God*

Please remain seated.

Breaking of the Bread

A period of silence is kept.

Please come forward to receive communion while maintaining distances from one another. The celebrant will give you a small plastic bag with several consecrated communion wafers in it. You are not to consume it at church. Instead, take it home, say the prayers on the card and consume it with family and friends. You are the light of the world. Take the body of Christ with you this week and feed on it in your heart while praying for others.

Celebrant: The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

Communion Hymn: *Crown Him (Majesty)*

Please remain seated.

We Go Out To Do Our Work

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Celebrant: Let us pray.
Celebrant and People: **Almighty God, giver of every good gift. All that we have and all that we are comes from you. Accept the humble gifts of who we are with our differences, our goodness, and our mistakes. Help us be the blessing to others that you are to us. Help us not to fear but to love fearlessly. Help us not to worry but to get busy and help. We ask you to remind us in our hearts and minds of the great needs of so many in the world today for love, truth, and clarity. Keep the clouds of darkness and confusion away as we work to make the world a better place. Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit who guides, defends, and protects us. And who leads us into all truth. Amen**

Closing Benediction:

Celebrant: Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! **Amen.** *(Ephesians 3:20-21)*
And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you now and for ever more.
Amen

Sending

Celebrant: Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life. Alleluia, Alleluia.
People: **Thanks be to God, Alleluia, Alleluia.**

Recessional Hymn: *King Of Love*

Please stand as you are able.

Food for thought

Scholars in the “Jesus Seminar” claim that one indicator the words in the Gospel were definitely spoken by Jesus is when he used “agrarian metaphors” such as seeds, fig trees, fruit and sheep and goats. What else about this gospel lesson would lead you to conclude that Jesus definitely did or did not say these things?

- How important is the idea of an afterlife in heaven to you? How does this idea influence your daily life?
- What if judgment took place in your life as an on-going process while you are living rather than at death?
- Would this lead to any changes in your behavior or treatment of others?
- What is the connection between the Beatitudes and today’s gospel?



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