

Bible Readings

Jeremiah 23:5-6 (GNT)

Luke 23:33-43 (NIV)

Colossians 1:9-20 (NRSVA)

Hymn: 63 All people that on earth do dwell

<https://youtu.be/NC5FfEavPM4>

Prayer of Approach and Confession and Lord's Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

You are the King of Glory,

You are the Lord of Lords, and the King of all Kings.

And we pray that your Kingdom will reign forever
in our hearts and in this world.

Lord, we pray for your Kingdom to come in all its fullness,
bringing a kingdom of justice, righteousness, hope, love,
peace, mercy and grace for all.

Lord, we ask that you rule in our hearts,
lead in this world and govern over your kingdom.

Lord Jesus,

We acknowledge your kingship and yet we know
that we often have our own plans and agendas
and we want to be rulers of our own world.

We do not look to you for guidance
nor heed it when it comes

Forgive us for those times.

Help us to know how to live as your Kingdom People
in these difficult and challenging times.

Let us know the assurance of your forgiveness now.

Lord Jesus,

there are a lot of Kings in this world who terrorize,
over tax, humiliate, over exploit,
and abuse those they are to lead.

Help us to spread the good news
of the different kind of King you are.

Lord, thank you for being a different kind of King.
Thank you for your goodness and kindness in our lives.
Thank you for your generosity and forgiveness
your love and your peace
Thank you for your Kingdom that is unlike any
Kingdom in this world

Living Lord Jesus,
guide us in all the days ahead,
so that in good or bad, success or failure, joy or sorrow,
we may walk with you and work for your kingdom,
until that day when you come again
and we are one with you and all your people for all eternity.
Lord, you are sovereign and ruler
and yet we know you too as you walk beside us
go with us now we ask in the name of him who taught us to pray
saying :
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 debts as we
forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver
us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the
glory for ever Amen.

Reflection

Today is a very special day in our Christian calendars. Today is known as Christ the King Sunday and we heard a reading that was all about the last moments in Jesus life – moments that marked the end of his life on earth but the beginning of a new life in paradise.

Today is a day when we think about endings and beginnings. It is the last Sunday in the Christian Year and next week as we celebrate the first week of advent - we start out on a new year in our Christian calendar. During Advent we will prepare ourselves, once again, to celebrate the coming of Christ into our world as a tiny babe. We will look forward once again in hope and expectation. We have been looking forward and making preparations in other ways too and as you all know we are

planning to open our church buildings for either a time of prayer or a service of worship each week during advent. It's a little complicated because we are going to continue to have a zoom service each morning as well.

So today is a time to look forward, to look forward to that celebration of Christmas and the birth of the baby Jesus but also to look even further forward to another ending and beginning, to look through the child and see the man who would be crucified on a cross. To see the man who died for us so that we might have an even brighter future, so that our sins might be forgiven – so that we could start again without the burdens that weigh us down – so that we could know the love and forgiveness of God – so that we might know his promise of eternal life, so that we might have eternal life in him.

Today we remember the reason why we are here—
As Jesus speaks to the two men being crucified beside him his very words are to do with forgiveness and the promise of paradise.

Crucifixion kills through slow suffocation. Speaking during crucifixion would have required excruciatingly painful breaths. One criminal suffers even further to mock Jesus – the other to express faith, hope and trust in his redemption – even before the power of the resurrection has been revealed!

Do we seek to curse or to bless?

Jesus final breaths plead forgiveness for his executioners and give assurance of redemption to a sinner.

Jesus knew exactly - what the real sins - of real people -who do ghastly things - are like.

And he gave himself up to death, in the face of those very sins, so that forgiveness and life would have the final word.

The crown of thorns, the inscription on the cross – this is the king of the Jews- the words of the leaders, soldiers and criminal are all meant to be a mockery of Christ's Kingship – yet ironically they underline the truth – Christ is king – **and as he dies on the**

cross – as he dies to this world – **he begins his kingly rule at God's right hand.**

Endings and beginnings – today might be a time when you want to lay down the burdens of your sins and look forward to starting the new Christian year with a clean slate.

Take a moment now and in the silence think of all the things that have happened or not happened this year which you regret – and bring them before God in your own personal prayer.

SILENCE

Know that you have God's forgiveness – and hear Jesus words to go and sin no more.

Today as we think about endings and beginnings, we have to look even further forward that Christ's death on the cross – we have to look forward to the promise of his coming again in glory at the end of all time. To look forward to the fulfilment of his kingly rule when the whole of creation will be redeemed and all people, the whole of creation will live together in peace and love.

This year has been a difficult year...I heard somebody the other day saying that it has been a terrible year and we will be glad to see the end of it. It has been a difficult year and yet hope and love have shone throughout it. The love and care that people have given to one another, the selfless acts, the laying down of lives so that others may live – and here I think of the dedicated nurses and Drs and other medical staff who have cared for people even when they have been at risk themselves. There has been a community spirit of looking out for one another too. Whoever would have thought that showing our love for one another would mean that we have to keep our distance from them, not touch them and wear a mask when we are near them? Whoever would have thought that in a time of crisis we would close our church buildings? Throughout it all we have kept going, we have wept with those who have lost loved ones, we have continued to support one another, we have kept meeting thanks to zoom, we have kept praying and we have kept looking forward in faith and hope and love and we have tried in so many different

ways to adapt to all the changes that have had to be implemented.

Today we hear the good news that vaccines will soon be ready, we can see an end in sight to the bad aspects of the year we have just lived through. We continue to look forward in hope to a time when life will be easier – I'd like to say, 'Back to normal' but I think it will be a different world and a new normal - but at least we will be able to be together, to worship together, to join as Christ's family in our church buildings once again, to shake hands, and hug and kiss and sing out our joy.

The one thing that is a sure and certain constant in all our endings and beginnings is that our Lord is here with us, guiding our footsteps and lifting us up when we fall – giving us strength for the journey and a reason to go on – filling our lives with love and acceptance, and hope, and forgiving us when we go wrong – and so we worship him our God and King – our friend and Savior – our companion on the way and we give our heartfelt thanks and praise. Amen

Hymn: 129 The Lord is King! lift up your voice!

<https://youtu.be/p2piwXNn8Rg>

Prayers for Others

Loving Lord,
as you hung on a cross, your first thought was for others.
You forgave the ones who ridiculed and tortured you,
You accepted the criminal who hung beside You.
And it was you who made a mockery
of the sign they placed above Your head.
For little did they know that they did indeed gaze at a king.

We don't need signs and labels to recognise
your power and your authority, Lord.
It is because we have seen the unlikely become reality;
because we have witnessed you in the unexpected,
and because we believe in truths honed by a carpenter's son,
that we dare to hope, Lord,

that Your kingdom has come among us
and continues to come, day after day,
among the poor and the lonely,
the sick and the weary, the angry and the abused,
the warmongers and the peace seekers.

And so it is for those and others whose lives are touched
by grief and greed, injustice and injury, emptiness and
endlessness that we pray now,
trusting in the goodness and the grace
that retrieved lost sheep and wayward sons;
that consoled grieving mothers and weeping women at a tomb;
that fed aching stomachs and eager minds;
that soothed the open wounds of untouchables
and the throbbing scars of hatred;
that laid open itself to pain, rejection and abandonment
so that we might know healing, acceptance and belonging.

And if we catch only a glimpse
of your mercy among the hardness of life,
if we can sense your presence
only for a fleeting moment
in the busyness of life,
if we can witness that wholeness
happens among the brokenness of life,
then we will know that your kingdom has come
and we pray that your will be done.
This day and always, Amen.