

starters for Sunday

Reign of Christ the King

23 November 2014

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank Rev Dr Chris Wigglesworth, Vice-Convenor of the Church and Society Council, for his thoughts on Reign of Christ the King.

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Quick Guide...

Helping people prepare for reading the Bible in worship can make a real difference. Overcoming nerves, reading in ways suitable to the text, speaking clearly etc.

You may wish to email these three links to the people reading Scripture on Sunday to support them in their involvement in worship: [Managing your nerves](#); [Creative readings](#); [Worship at the Lectern](#)

[Matthew 25: 31-46](#)

[Ezekiel 34: 11-16, 20-24](#)

The Good Shepherd

Jesus was a Servant-King in his earthly life, yet the story of the Sheep and the Goats reminds us that one day the world will be called to recognise his authority. We live in the time in-between. Kingship is with Jesus, not with the Church – we should certainly not wish for the “good old days of Christendom” when, in the Scots version, the kirk session judged on morality, and the laird could count on the minister to teach submission by ordinary folk to the wealthy! We are not to “lord” it over others. The servant role of Jesus is ours to follow. But in the kingship of Jesus there is a challenge to all with any earthly power, and the best service that the Church can render them is to remind them that they will be held to account not only by the electorate, but by God.

Jesus is both the Good Shepherd and Kingly judge of all humanity.

Thoughts to help in preaching from the Gospel story:

So well-known, there is surely no need to elaborate or embroider this story. But it may help to point out that flocks of sheep and goats in the Middle East (and many other parts of the globe) are difficult to tell apart, especially from a distance.

What are the surprising elements of the story?

1. The fact that neither those who practised true neighbour-love, nor those who failed to, realised that this was the real measure of their attitude to Jesus. He is the judge of all. True religion is less about ritual actions and religious activity than human relations (as also James wrote, chapter 1, verse 27). The needy are of ultimate importance in and of



themselves. The image of God we have to reverence is the one in the poor and oppressed. This is fundamental to the kingdom.

2. The fact the prisoners are specifically mentioned is worth thinking about. The Church and Society Prison Visitor Centre Project in Polmont and beyond is worth a mention. How we treat prisoners is an essential measure of our society. Prison Visitors are in short supply. So is support for prisoners of conscience, see [Amnesty International](#).

Other points worth considering

1. A few writers on Matthew restrict the application to fellow-Christians. This goes against the Gospel references to the Samaritans, and to the Syro-Phoenician woman, and to Paul's advice – do good to all (Galatians 6: 10).
2. On the Ezekiel passage: the whole flock, ie the whole society, has to be cared for, especially the weak. They are to be “fed with justice” (v.16). The successful rich are not a pastoral priority. In fact the “fat” are challenged for pushing the poor around, compare James, chapter 2!
3. It might be worth reminding people that Jesus, as the new David (v.24), is shepherd of all the nations, so that confining God's promises to the Jewish people and to the land of Israel is past.
4. I think there is a valid application to all with political power. The way the poor are treated is basic to justice. In our society and in the wider world, in which inequality is increasing, as it certainly is today, those with power should be openly challenged to use it to change things. Taxation should redistribute wealth as well as income. Tax evasion is a form of stealing from the poor. The Church should remind politicians, and all of us who select them in elections, that God holds all people accountable!
5. Do we need to remind people that the imagery of judgement in the story is not literal; but a time for accountability to God is real? And the time for doing the right thing is now!
6. As to what is the right thing to be doing for your congregation, perhaps the next meeting of the Kirk Session should have the topic as an Order of the Day!



Prayers

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God,
it is your will to restore all things
in your well-beloved Son,
our Lord and King.

Grant that the peoples of the earth,
now divided and enslaved by sin,
may be freed and brought together
under his gentle and loving rule;
who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

At start of worship a bidding prayer

As we gather let us be thankful for the freedom we have this day to worship God;
and let us be mindful of Christians praising God worldwide this day, many with far fewer material
goods, many struggling with with more hindrances than we can imagine.

All of us invited to call upon God, the Creator of all things and Judge of all peoples,
seeking forgiveness for our self-centredness, and also seeking help to make our lives more open
to God and more encouraging to our neighbours:

so let us pray

Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom 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.

After the Sermon

In our intercession let us join our prayer for the whole human family with the unceasing prayer of Christ the King.

Gracious God, we pray for justice and peace in the whole world, remembering especially this day...

and we pray for fullness of life for everyone;

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

For all who are hungry, for all who are thirsty, for all who are strangers, for all who are ill-clad, for all who are sick, and for all who are in prison,

and we pray for all who do help them;

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

For all engaged in agriculture, industry and commerce, for all workers, skilled and unskilled, and for all seeking work;

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

For all to whom authority is entrusted in this and every country, and for all who have power over other people;

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

For the unity of all Christian people, for our witness and service in the world, and for all people of good will in all faiths and none, for our commitment to the common good;

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.



That with all your people who have served you and their neighbours in this life, we may in the Final Judgement take possession of the kingdom prepared for us, and share in the eternal joy of your new creation.

Hasten, heavenly Father, the coming of your kingdom and grant these prayers, which we ask in the Name of our Lord, our King and our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Blessing

May the peace of Christ the King go with you,
wherever you may be sent, and for whoever you may serve,
and may you be brought home to God rejoicing!

Musical Suggestions

	Psalm 95 metrical version 1 to 7
CH4 445	Alleluia, sing to Jesus
CH4 458	At the name of Jesus
CH4 259	Beauty for brokenness
CH4 436	Christ triumphant, ever reigning
CH4 459	Crown him with many crowns
CH4 374	From heaven you came
CH4 443	He is Lord, he is Lord
CH4 279	Make way, make way
CH4 356	Meekness and majesty
CH4 531	My Jesus, my Saviour
CH4 449	Rejoice, the Lord is king
CH4 438	The head that once was crowned with thorns
CH4 462	The King of love my shepherd is
CH4 544	When I needed a neighbour...



Additional Resources

Resourcing Mission



[Resourcing Mission](#) is host to Starters for Sunday and other key mission resources for download and purchase. Online booking is available for [Mission & Discipleship events](#). Please check back regularly, as new items are being added all the time. If there is something you'd like to see on this new site, please [contact us](#) via the website.

Prayer Resources

These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might look for in prayers. [Revealing Love](#) is available now from [St Andrew Press](#).



Music Resources

The hymns mentioned in this material are ideas of specific hymns you might choose for this week's themes. However, for some excellent articles on church music and ideas for new music resources, please check out our online music pages [Different Voices](#).

Preaching Resources



These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might preach this Sunday. [Preachers Perspectives](#) is a resource where we have asked twelve preachers to share the insights they have gathered through their experiences of writing and delivering sermons regularly.

Scots Worship Resources

[The Kirk's Ear](#) - Scots in the Kirk series for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and other times of the year

[Wurship Ouk bi Ouk](#) - Metrical psalms, hymns, prayers and words for worship

[Scots Sacraments](#) may give you helpful material if you are celebrating Communion or have a Baptism.

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to express its thanks to the Rev Dr Chris Wigglesworth for providing us with this Sunday's material.

Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.

