

Welcome

Welcome once more to the worship of Tyndale Baptist Church – recorded in the building that is so central to the life of this church, but that we can't use as a gathering place at the moment. Still, we are gathered, in less-than-tangible ways, by our shared faith and sense of belonging and by the work of God's Spirit in our hearts. This is not just me standing at a lectern and technology skilfully worked by Ian; even though it feels a bit odd to be delivering prayers, readings, music and a sermon, in an empty building, the reality is what can't be seen – a community gathered to worship together.

And in these days rife with conspiracy theories and alternative realities, we proclaim an unseen reality that rings with a truth as ancient as life itself – God's reality; His presence as we worship; His presence in the world through Christ; his eternal presence, behind everything that moves and has its being in this wonderful universe.

So welcome, whoever and wherever you are. As we get ever nearer to the warm festival that frames the Christian story – Christmas; as we prepare to begin the hopeful waiting time of Advent, today we come to the Sunday of Christ the King; so that His majesty and meekness will cast its wonderful glowing shadow over the coming season, whatever the world may bring..

CG 127 'The Lord's my Shepherd'

Tyndale Virtual Singing Group

Call to Worship

Goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow us all and shape the world – and we gather in this reality in the midst of a world of other-than-goodness and less-than-mercy – and in the presence of all that would do us down; and in the face of the world's darkest places; and by faith in the promised presence of God in Christ, we worship.

BPW 40 ['Fill your hearts with joy and gladness'](#)

Opening Prayer

Joy and gladness pouring out of the heart of God – Lord we worship you; for your joy and gladness; your love and wisdom. Your might and majesty surround us and fill us and frame our lives –

Lord we worship you; we who are wounded by the world; we who have known pain; we who are all too conscious of the woes of the world; we seek the comfort that comes only from you; we crave peace and joy and we are ready to humble ourselves in your presence, and lay low before you and fear you as we worship – for you are very great.

Forgive us, Lord, restore us..(pause)..the Lord says, 'do not be afraid, for I have overcome the world'

Thank you, Lord; our hearts are filled; joy and gladness are ours; peace and plenty are our heritage; we love your laws, your judgements; we would walk in your ways and listen for your words all the days of our lives ; we, your children, praise you, and in Jesus' name, we worship..

Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

['What a faithful God'](#)

Reading

[Ezekiel 34.11-16,20-24](#)

['Guardian God'](#)

Cantus Firmus Trust

Jon Pocock, Lee Abbey, Devon March 2020 – composed at the beginning of the first lockdown

Reading

[Matthew 25.31-46](#)

['I'll fly away'](#)

'Schola diffusa' , a pandemic virtual choir from US & Europe
Recorded in May 2020:

Sermon

Never has there been a better time to wrestle with the ancient idea of a King - as a President who thinks he's a King hides in his White House bunker; as a PM who once said he wanted to be King of the world struggles with the reality of that world; as Kings in all but name in many places *revel* in their power, while the people maunder, oppressed, lied to, abused, and treason becomes a matter not of disloyalty to the country, but of disloyalty to the leadership – the Kingship...

Kingship has always been a problem; might is right, privilege of the few..

Power – you could say, kingship is power, pure and simple. Down all the years in pretty well every place, kingship – dictatorship, presidency, emperorship – is power. Democracies disguise it, of course, and these days it's hedged about with all kinds of things like parliaments and elections but it still comes down to...power, pure and simple.

Conspiracy theories proceed on the understanding that some *one* or some *group* holds and wields power over everybody else, usually in secret, with evil intent, typically subverting and undermining laws and so on, but always, *always*...power –

But it's not always as obvious as a debate on Question Time. Sometimes power is – the power of a male mogul; sometimes it's the power of a national culture over a minority group – sometimes it goes unnoticed; like when there's a clamour to ease the lockdown for Christmas and the unfairness of a three-hour notice to cancel Eid Al Hada in July in Bradford goes largely unreported..and what about Diwali?

Sometimes it's the power of a normal lifestyle or the power of myth – remember Colston?

Today, on 'Christ the King' Sunday let's not get too hung up on trad. images of kingship. I've seen bits of the Crown and enjoyed wallowing in some of the comforting trappings of our monarchy, but that's not what kingship is all about

I know parts of the Bible describe the world of kingship – the Kings of Israel; King David, the Kingdom of God – but that's not what kingship is all about either, I think, not for us, not anymore...

In our day kingship is about dictators and presidents and parliaments and archbishops and movie moguls and privileged majorities and exploited minorities and billionaires and rich countries acting only in their own interests; about corruption in high places and rampant poverty in low places; about haves and have-nots and the rich growing richer while the poor go to the wall.

And we put traditional kings and queens in goldfish bowls and use them to lend a cloak of respectability to our machinations, from London to Bangkok, but while populations are distracted by such things, real power stalks other corridors – and while we crave it, the old adage rings truer with every passing day – 'power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely'

But the Bible reminds us - ultimately, power belongs to God. Ezekiel's words speak to a world in which kingly power has grown corrupt – kings are supposed to be shepherds of the people but the shepherd-kings of Israel have been feeding themselves, instead of the sheep and ruling with force and harshness

- An indictment of corrupt, self-serving, elitist leadership – kingship – in any age..

But Ezekiel speaks the ultimate words of God 'I myself will be their shepherd – their king – I will search for my sheep; ..feed them with good pasture, seek the lost, bring back the strayed, bind up the injured, strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

A vision of godly, kingly, just & kindly leadership – kingship – in any age. Oh, that such a vision should inform today's leaders, be they democrats or dictators, presidents or parliamentarians

And Ezekiel sets them a model – David, the true shepherd-king of Israel - I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.

Was there ever a better vision for the world of a true kingly leader than David?

Actually, in the Christian vision, there was – Jesus – the King of the ages, inheriting the mantle and fulfilling the vision of David the shepherd King – Jesus, the shepherd of the sheep..Jesus, the King of love...Jesus - King Jesus

What have generations of his followers said as they have spoken truth to the corrupt powers of their day?

'We have no King but Jesus'

But hold on a minute – before we get too carried away with ideas about benevolent dictatorships and 'if only God's Kingdom would come'

Look to Jesus' words – to the judgement of the nations, to the sheep and the goats, to the imagined day when all the people gather before him and he separates those who did what he required from those who did not do what he required; those who healed the sick, clothed the naked, etc, etc, - and those who did not – by the sounds 'cos they were too preoccupied with being religious, but anyway – who did not do what the King required.

That's the thing, you see, *what the King required*..These days we spend a lot of time demanding our rights and railing against corrupt power, but the power of God is a *covenanted* power – it is kind and true and just and merciful but it requires that we – we the people - the sheep – act justly and love mercy and walk humbly as well – and heal the sick, and clothe the naked...etc, etc..

That's the vision of today, Christ the King – it's not just of a nice Kingdom ruled over by a sappy softie who lets us do what we like, it's a vision of a true Kingdom ruled over by a just King who calls us to do what we – if we are to be true human beings – must do –

They do say nations get the leaders they deserve..we can see it all around. Maybe the Bible vision is similar. Human beings who live truly get the leadership they deserve – and if we will love and live for love – *then* In a corrupt world we will be able to say 'we have no king but Jesus'

'King of kings, Majesty'

Intercessions

Today we pray for the leaders of our world – and for their people

We pray for leaders in many places – in parliaments, assemblies and councils – who are having to do their best in the face of challenges they could never have imagined – to organise responses, to communicate messages, to offer comfort and hope.

May they find strength to cope, accept help from experts, gain wisdom from experience; may their humanity be enriched by the Holy Spirit

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for leaders in many places who are tempted to misuse their power; to trade in lies; to misappropriate funds; to reward cronies; to mislead and obfuscate and avoid scrutiny

May they have their wrong exposed; may they be held to account; may their consciences be troubled by the Holy Spirit

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for leaders at many levels who have to live with false accusations, hold out against corruption; try to make failed institutions work

May they be strengthened in their commitment to the truth; may they know the support of the people they serve; may they grow more resilient and creative by the work of the Holy Spirit

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for individuals who are unjustly judged, wrongfully imprisoned, prevented from access to welfare, treated harshly by bureaucracy

May they know that they are not forgotten; may they find their way to help; may their hearts be touched by the Holy Spirit

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for individuals who are rendered stateless, who flee oppression and seek asylum, who must rely on the kindness of strangers and endure the opprobrium of media

May they be given a vision of God's kingdom by the Holy Spirit

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for journalists, satirists, commentators, scientists, artists & all who face unemployment, business

failure and lost opportunities

May they remain committed to what's true; may they have their hope renewed by the Holy Spirit

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for ourselves, the citizens and subjects of a settled land, where, nevertheless, trust is under pressure; wrongdoing is a temptation & restrictions on freedom of choice come hard

May we always be challenged with the values of God's Kingdom by the Holy Spirit

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Words of Offering

As financial rigours spread all around, in business, employment and in homes, and as the natural reaction is to conserve and keep, still we give, trusting that the act of giving will, as it reflects the life of God, enable the life of God's Kingdom to grow in the world

The Grace:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.

BPW 37 ['Crown Him with many crowns'](#)

Blessing

So may the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us and remain with us always. Amen

Thanks to Rachel, Sarah, to the Tyndale Singers, to Mike and Sue for the readings and to Nick for getting the script out in the post. Thanks to Ian for producing and recording the service in the church.

A 'together though apart' time follows at 11.30 am