

Sunday, November 25, 2007
Christ the King / Lectionary 34
Christ the King / Proper 29

INTRODUCTION

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun does its successive journeys run," wrote the English hymnist Isaac Watts. He died on this date in 1748 but left a glorious legacy of English hymnody. On this last Sunday of the church year, we honor Christ, who reigns as king from the cross. The effusive descriptions of Christ in the letter to the Colossians remind us of the absolutely central and vital role he rightfully claims in our life. All space and all time belong to the one who offers paradise to those who live and die with him.

PRAYER OF THE DAY (ELW)

O God, our true life, to serve you is freedom,
and to know you is unending joy.
We worship you, we glorify you,
we give thanks to you for your great glory.
Abide with us, reign in us,
and make this world into a fit habitation for your divine majesty,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

READINGS

Jeremiah 23:1–6
Psalm 46
Colossians 1:11–20
Luke 23:33–43

FIRST READING: Jeremiah 23:1–6

Today's reading builds on the common ancient Near Eastern metaphor of the king as shepherd. The influence of an unjust ruler is about to bring disaster. Nevertheless, the Lord will raise up a new and righteous shepherd who will rule a restored Judah.

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD. ²Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the LORD. ³Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ⁴I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the LORD.

⁵The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

PSALM (ELW): Psalm 46

¹God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
²**Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved,
and though the mountains shake in the depths of the sea;**
³though its waters rage and foam,
and though the mountains tremble with its tumult.
⁴**There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.**
⁵God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be shaken;
God shall help it at the break of day.

⁶The nations rage, and the kingdoms shake;
God speaks, and the earth melts away. R

⁷The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

⁸Come now, regard the works of the LORD,
what desolations God has brought up- on the earth;

⁹behold the one who makes war to cease in all the world;
who breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, and burns the shields with fire.

¹⁰"Be still, then, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth."

¹¹The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our stronghold. R

SECOND READING: Colossians 1:11–20

An early Christian hymn praises Christ as one who reigns in heaven and on earth.

¹¹May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers — all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

GOSPEL: Luke 23:33–43

On the cross, Jesus is revealed to be a different sort of ruler than many had anticipated. He has the power to welcome others to Paradise, but will not use that power to save himself from death.

³³When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [³⁴Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. ³⁵And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" ³⁶The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, ³⁷and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" ³⁸There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

³⁹One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" ⁴⁰But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?" ⁴¹And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴²Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Trusting in God's promises, let us pray for the church, the creation, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Gather your church, merciful God, so that your flock scattered by fear and doubt finds assurance in saving waters, forgiving words, and holy communion. Hear us, O God,
your mercy is great.

Fill all creation, mighty God, so that we who are awed by your majestic works may wisely protect and

preserve the wonders you have made. Hear us, O God,
your mercy is great.

Rule the nations, sovereign God, so that those in authority govern justly, serve humbly, and strive for reconciliation and peace throughout the world. Hear us, O God,
your mercy is great.

Help all in need, compassionate God. Heal those enduring sickness or trials (*especially*), that they may find refuge and strength in you. Hear us, O God,
your mercy is great.

Inspire hymnwriters, creating God, that (*like your servant Isaac Watts, whom we commemorate today*) they may give voice to the breadth and depth of our faith in you. Hear us, O God,
your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Give us courage, eternal God, to trust in your promises until that day when we will dwell with all your saints in light. Hear us, O God,
your mercy is great.

Receive these prayers and those of our hearts, O God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our hope and our redeemer.
Amen.

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