

Salford Methodist Circuit



Christ Doesn't Abuse His Status - 22nd November 2020
Rev Kim Ratcliffe

Good morning, and welcome to worship

This is the day that the Lord has made
We will rejoice and be glad in it!

We're going to sing our first hymn this morning, which is 'Majesty', so I thank Clare and her team for doing the singing and the playing of the instruments
Thank you.

Hymn: Majesty, Worship His Majesty

*Majesty, worship his majesty;
unto Jesus be glory, honour and praise.
Majesty, kingdom authority,
flows from his throne unto his own,
his anthem raise.*

*So exalt, lift up on high the name of Jesus,
magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus, the King.
Majesty, worship his majesty,
Jesus, who died, now glorified,
King of all kings.*

Prayers

Loving God, we have come to worship you.

Help us to remember that you are here with us.
May we pray to you in faith,
Sing your praise with gratitude,
And listen to your word with eagerness;
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Eternal God, source of all blessing,
Help us to worship you
With all our heart and mind and strength;
For you alone are God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
For ever and ever Amen.

Holy God,
To you alone belong glory, honour and praise.
We join with the hosts of heaven as we worship.

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We worship you alone because you alone are worthy of adoration from every mouth,
And every tongue shall sing your praises today.
You create the earth by your power;
You save the human race in your mercy
And renew it through your grace.
To you, loving God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Be all glory, honour and praise
Now and for ever. Amen.

Let us confess our sins.

Loving God,
We have sinned against you
In what we have thought, said and done.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
We have not loved our neighbour as ourselves.
We are truly sorry
And turn away from what is wrong.
Forgive us for the sake of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Silence]

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
This is his gracious word:
'Your sins are forgiven.'
Amen. Thanks be to God.

Amen

Lord's Prayer

*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,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.*



Amen.

Bible Reading: Ezekiel 34 : 11 - 16 & 20 - 24

For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my sheep and make them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

"Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says to them: see, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken.

Bible Reading: Matthew 25 : 31 - 46

'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

'Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

'Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"



'The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

'Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me."

'They also will answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?"

'He will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me."

'Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.'

Hymn: The Kingdom of God is Justice and Joy

*The kingdom of God
is justice and joy,
for Jesus restores
what sin would destroy;
God's power and glory
in Jesus we know,
and here and hereafter
the kingdom shall grow.*

*The kingdom of God
is mercy and grace,
the prisoners are freed,
the sinners find place,
the outcast are welcomed
God's banquet to share,
and hope is awakened
in place of despair.*

*The kingdom of God
is challenge and choice,
believe the good news,
repent and rejoice!
His love for us sinners
brought Christ to his cross,*

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*our crisis of judgement
for gain or for loss.*

*God's kingdom is come,
the gift and the goal,
in Jesus begun,
in heaven made whole;
the heirs of the kingdom
shall answer his call,
and all things cry glory
to God all in all!*

When we are born, we are born with no view of the world around us outside of the womb. Hopefully the environment that we are born into is one of love and affection. The people who are immediately responsible for our care, they try their best to create a home for us that is good to be in, where we are safe and we become a part of a family that we learn from a very early age our family values from.

At some point the outside world begins to enter into our world and also begins to affect our lives. We don't even need to leave our own home for this to happen, because what we hear on the radio and hear on the television and what we read in the newspapers begins to have some influence on the world that we see outside.

The places that our parents take us to, the people who we come into contact with when we are out and about with our parents/grandparents/childminders, the other members of our families also have an influence on us and how we view the world. We begin to develop relationships with different people; some of them, those people are from our own age group, some people who are older than us and so we build up, I guess our blood family and our extended family and friends too.

So when we go to school we have already got the view of the world that has been developed within that context. For most children they enter school, the place that they will spend the majority of their waking hours, and it can be quite something for them to do. It also affects the family, the children then begin to come home sometimes with behaviour and what we may see as 'bad influences' that begin to develop and often if we don't try to deal with this or share our concerns with the teachers at the school then life can sometimes go in a very different direction.

For some children they will make mistakes and they will sometimes make the wrong choices as we as adults do but by the grace of God if we have been brought up in a loving and stable environment then somewhere along the line, and I'm not saying in every case, but mainly we come back into the fold and begin once more along the right track in life.



But for some people their lives won't begin with being with a safe and loving environment and almost from day one life is a struggle for them but somehow they survive, if only just survive. This isn't necessarily from families that live on what we used to call the bread line – family values whether born into a family with wealth or born into a family with very little money.

We can be strong influenced, and influential people within that world and we can be influenced by people in the world but it doesn't mean that we have to be a tyrant or aggressive in our ways; we can also be quiet and humbling and still be influential – if the values that we hold true to are from God and the values that God would have us take into the world. Jesus is our Lord and our King but he shows us this in such a strong and influential way in his humbling Kingship.

When Jesus chastises his disciples in scripture he does so with a loving heart - he wants us to learn, so that we can learn from Him we must listen to him. Whether we are young or older, when we have even experienced one moment in Jesus's company, then we are given the opportunity to have learned a small lesson or a larger lesson in life that we can teach to others too. Living out our lives outside in the communities that we belong to.

Christ the King does not misuse his status by being aggressive and unapproachable, he goes wherever he can, taking the opportunity to guide the people along the right way. Looking for opportunities where there is injustice to bring justice, being firm when he needs to be firm. I guess we call this being assertive but in his humbling manner. When have you had the opportunity to be in the presence of Jesus? Have you ever felt that someone you have been with just oozes Christ from within them, reflecting in their manner and their approach to their life and the way they treat others?

There was a time, a good number of years ago now, when I used to go to the Women Ministers gathering and we had various people that came to be with us for that week. One of the weeks was Kathy Galloway from Iona - the Iona Community, Cathy Bird a Methodist Minister who I believe is now in our Manchester District. She was, in her subject, she was 'Sexy, Cynical...' and something else, I can't remember what it was. But then we had Sister Anne Marie Farrell and that year it was just wonderful. Sister Anne Marie Farrell - she is a retired nun who lives over in France and from the moment that she was and from the moment she was in our company somehow the mood of these four days was just set, wonderfully, very, very spiritually. Her wisdom and her insight into matters arising from scripture were so powerful but in such a spiritual gentle way. She didn't need to be assertive or aggressive, she just had a wonderful, spiritual, gentle way about her Even in her laughter there was, what I guess you would call Holiness.

You know when we talk about the Holy Spirit, well I see the Holy Spirit as always being with us and around us but from time to time its presence is so obvious for me that it can be a very physical feeling that I feel. Sometimes this happens

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when something is being affirmed within a conversation that I'm having with someone. I can only describe it as a tingle but in different strengths, and sometimes a warm glow i can feel within me and around me. When we walk into some rooms that have had a lot of prayer in them over the years sometimes you know that the atmosphere is different, it just somehow feels different.

Well Anne Marie Farrell managed to create a sort of ambiance, you could tell that she was a follower of Christ simply by being in her presence.

But place someone in the room who is hell-bent on doing everything that goes against all that God has taught us, the whole of the atmosphere can change, it can turn around just like that. And it can suddenly become very uncomfortable and things begin to look and feel very different.

Going back to childhood – when you are a parent you just know if your child isn't being completely honest with you, and having been children ourselves we may remember a time when we have tried to pull the wool over our parent's eyes and may have got away with it too, from time to time. But how does that actually make you feel – as a parent and also as the one who tried to fool your parent. It isn't a nice feeling at all is it? We know what is right and what is wrong.

In this account of the last judgement, Jesus is speaking with people who would have had clear presumptions about who would be saved and who would be damned. Who of us are acceptable in god's eyes? Well Jesus says 'just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' We each have a family and in church we often speak of the family of the church, and this can create a rather cosy image but who is Jesus's family? Jesus went from place to place and his family were the people who were hungry, the people who were poor, the people who were naked, the people who were sick, the people who were imprisoned. We can all probably identify when we have seen people's needs and tried to help in whatever way that we can. But there have also been occasions when we have failed to respond lovingly.

Think back to a time when someone you know has done something that has been so thoughtful and kind and the feeling that that has given to you; think about a time when a complete stranger has done something that has made you think that the world really isn't a bad a place to be in.

We each have a time to live and a time to die, but it is the bits, our lives in between our birth and our death that matters. But God is with us even before we have ever have known him to be and in Ezekiel verse 15 and 16 he says, and I'll repeat this 'I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will find them a place to rest. I, the Sovereign Lord, have spoken, "I will look for those that are lost, bring back those who wander off, bandage those who are hurt, and heal those that are sick, but those who are fat and strong I will destroy because I am the shepherd who does what is right."

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God hasn't set a trap for us, God knows our every situation, God knows the situation that we are born into, he knows the trials and the challenges that life holds for us but he is also there as our guide to help us through every moment of our life journey. But we need to be humble enough to allow him to do that. Yes, we may have had the most fantastic childhood that has led to us going far in our lives or we may have had the most awful childhood that no matter how we turned there was never a helping hand there for us. But today is another day, our future begins today, we can either remain in the past and think about the regrets of not getting things quite right or we can begin today with a clean slate so to speak and say, yes God, we have accepted you into our lives and we want to walk alongside the poor and the helpless and the sick, the downtrodden, the naked. Maybe for the rest of this week when you meet with other, you know safely and in your bubble or perhaps you just pass by a stranger in the street, think about how, if that was Jesus you were meeting with, or speaking with on the telephone or even on Zoom- think if that was Jesus you were meeting with, how would you speak with him, how would you treat him? It may be that you have already been in his company but won't know it until you meet with God on that very last day. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Blessed are you, eternal God,
To be praised and glorified for ever.

Hear us as we pray for your holy catholic Church:
make us all one, that the world may believe.

Grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you as you would have them:
That the life of Christ may be revealed in us to others.

Strengthen all who minister in Christ's name:
Give them courage to proclaim your Gospel wherever they may be.

Inspire and lead those who hold authority in the nations of the world:
Guide them and all people in the way of justice and peace.

Make us alive to the needs of our community always:
Help us to share each other's joys and each other's burdens.

Look with kindness on our homes and families:
Grant that your love may grow in our hearts.

Inspire us to have compassion on those who suffer
from sickness, grief or trouble:
in your presence may they find their strength.

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We remember those that have died.
Father, into your hands we commend them.

We praise you for all your saints
Who have entered your eternal glory:
Bring us all to share in your heavenly kingdom.

Heavenly Father,
You have promised to hear
What we ask in the name of your Son:
We pray you to accept and answer our prayers,
Not as we ask in our ignorance,
Nor as deserve in our sinfulness,
But as you know and love us in your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn: Lord Your Church On Earth Is Seeking

*Lord, your Church on earth is seeking
your renewal from above;
teach us all the art of speaking
with the accent of your love.
We would heed your great commission:
sending us to every place -
preach, baptise, fulfil my mission,
serve with love and share my grace.*

*Freedom give to those in bondage,
lift the burdens caused by sin.
Give new hope, new strength and courage,
grant release from fears within:
light for darkness; joy for sorrow;
love for hatred; peace for strife.
These and countless blessings follow
as the Spirit gives new life.*

*In the streets of every city
where the bruised and lonely dwell,
let us show the Saviour's pity,
let us of his mercy tell.
In all lands and with all races
let us serve, and seek to bring
all the world to render praises,
Christ, to you, Redeemer, King.*

Blessing

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The blessing of God,
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Be among us and remain with us always. Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

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Majesty, Worship His Majesty - Jack Hayford

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