

twelvebaskets

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ORDINARY 34C

20th November 2022

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening prayers

As the darkness of winter draws in,
As the coldest time of the year approaches,
As we close our doors and turn up our heaters,
Come, Lord of light,
Come, God of the warm embrace,
Come to me today, Immanuel, God with us.

[Pause].

Into your presence I come.
The Servant King,
Prince of Peace,
Lamb of God.

Into your presence I come with my head bowed,
my heart open,
my tongue stilled,
and my ears alert to hearing from you.

Into your presence I come,
longing to meet with you today.
Into your presence I come with all my hearts' desires and troubles.
In a moment of quiet, I hand over all that is weighing me down this day,
Handing them into your presence.

[Stillness].

'Your sins are forgiven' says the Lord. In your presence, I am set free.
Into your presence I come,
please be with me today.

Amen.¹

You may now wish to say the Lord's prayer in a version or translation with which you are most familiar.

Hymn:

331 STF – King of kings, majesty - [YouTube](#)

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Readings: Luke 23:33-43 – [Click for reading](#)

¹ Opening prayers written by Tim Baker and Sheila Matthews

Response to the reading

This Sunday, the one before Advent, is called in some traditions 'Christ the King', and this reading, coming just before we embark on the familiar Christmas story, reminds us of the end of Jesus' ministry even as we are about to begin his story again.

This contrast helps us to sing 'O Come, O Come Immanuel', not just in a cosy, festive, Christmas-is-coming sort of way – but to recognise the miracle of Immanuel, God with us in all God's fullness. That miracle included and led to Jesus' betrayal by his own people and death on the cross, but also to the remarkable resurrection and recognition of Christ as King. This Sunday, we remember that the statement 'God with us', is a remarkable, life-changing truth, that takes us right to the other end of Jesus' life, and his death upon the cross, as depicted in our gospel reading for today.

On this Christ the King Sunday, when we look forward with anticipation to all the magic and delight of the Christmas season, may we also see the pain and injustice in our world. May we acknowledge that there is much that is not 'as it should be'. And may we play our part in seeking to stand up for those who do not have a voice, to defend the cause of the weak, the vulnerable, the oppressed, the poor. Jesus' ministry showed us how to do that, we just have to be brave enough to follow.

Below are some questions for discussion or reflection:

- 1) Is there something you need to find the courage in your heart to do? What is stopping you from being brave and doing the 'right thing'?
- 2) What is your favourite thing about the Jesus story at Christmas time? Is there something that you might find particularly helpful to reflect on this year?
- 3) In what way are you helping all things to 'hold together'? Are you an agent of togetherness?

When you have had a time of reflection or conversation, why not say this prayer out loud:

God who came, God who is coming, God who comes right here, right now,
I thank you that you are holding all things together through Jesus the Christ,
And inspiring me by your Spirit.
Show me how to be a part of that big story this Advent season. Help me to make a
space in my hearts for your incarnation, your arrival, your birth.
In the name of the one who is King, and baby, and cosmic, Jesus the Christ, I pray.
Amen.²

² Reflection written by Tim Baker

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 21st November

- Loving God, send your Spirit.
 - For all those who are on the margins, who are told that they are not welcome, I pray that they might know that your love is for all.
 - I pray that you show me how to be to be part of the solution where suffering is the problem.
- Loving God, send your Spirit. Amen.

Tuesday 22nd November

God is everywhere, if only you could be still enough to notice.

Today, your challenge is to notice.

Look for God in the sunrise, the birdsong, the taste of pizza, the comfort of your sofa, the embrace of a loved one, a text message that makes you smile... whatever it is. Notice.

Wednesday 23rd November

One of the images we have of the Holy Spirit is that of a wild goose. Beautiful in flight, slightly dangerous to approach, wild and a little unpredictable – perhaps you have a story about the Spirit that echoes this?

Today, why not pray into some of the more unpredictable and difficult areas of your life. Is God working through those areas / spaces?

Thursday 24th November

- If you can, go on a prayer walk. Or ask someone to help you make a journey around your neighbourhood – just the few houses near you would be fine, or go on a longer trip if you'd like to take in a whole estate or community.
- As you travel past each house, pray for the people who live there – just in your mind, or under your breath. Hold their situations, whether you know them or not, in your heart.

Friday 25th November

- Why not spend some time in silent meditation today?
- You could set an alarm – perhaps for 10-15 minutes, and then finding somewhere comfortable, where you can sit and empty your mind.

If it helps, you could use the Headspace app or website, or a similar service, to help you focus on the meditation and get used to the idea of sitting in silence for a length of time.

- Is this a practice you could include in your daily spiritual life?

Saturday 26th November

God my father and God my mother,
God my big sister and God my little brother,
God my best friend and God my Creator,
I open myself up to encounter you again this weekend.
Move in my life, open my eyes and heart,
That I may see your love,
And know your invitation to be a part of your Kingdom.
Amen.