

Holy God, we raise before you your church here in this Benefice. We pray that you will draw us together and unite us in the love of Christ that we may proclaim with one voice your justice and righteousness in a broken world.
Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Loving God, we pray for your world. We pray for peace, reconciliation and healing in the places of war, hatred, terrorism and the Covid Pandemic. We pray that the nations of this world may be united and subject to the rule of Christ the King, through whom and for whom all things were created. We pray for Elizabeth our Queen, may her rule be guided and influenced by the example set by your son who lives and reigns as King of Kings.
Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Father God, we pray for our communities here and those of our friends and families, our places of work and study. Help us to know the people around us to be our brothers and sisters in Christ and to serve them as He would serve them.
Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Loving God, we pray for all those who suffer, for the many people who have contracted the coronavirus both here and across our world. Bring peace to those worried, fearful and uncertain as the virus spreads. We pray that they will know the presence of your Son alongside them and the power of Christ the King within them bringing peace and healing for them and help and encouragement for those caring for them at this time of need
Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

We also pray for governments and authorities who are developing strategies to contain and deal with the virus. Help us all to be responsible in the things that we do in our lives to prevent the spread of the virus by taking heed of the recommended precautions and avoiding situations which may make things worse.
Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Merciful God, we raise before you all who have died and who are now with your Son the king. We pray for those who have recently died and for their resurrection into the kingdom of God, and for those whose anniversary falls at this time.
Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Faithful God, we give thanks to you for all that you do in our lives. As the church year comes to an end, we commend to you all those for whom we have prayed throughout the year and ask that you continue to use us and our prayers to make a difference in their lives.

Merciful Father: Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: Rejoice! The Lord is King

The Blessing
May Christ the King, make us faithful and strong to do his will, that we may reign with him in glory and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon us now and always. **Amen.**

The Benefice of St Benedict

Ashmanhaugh, Barton Turf, Beeston St Lawrence, Horning, Irstead, & Neatishead

Morning Worship – 22nd November 2020 Christ the King

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be always with you. **and also with you.**

We have come together in the name of Christ, to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to hear and receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world, and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Confession

We come to God as one from whom no secrets are hidden, to ask for his forgiveness and peace.

Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight.

We are sorry and repent.

Have mercy on us according to your love.

Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.

Renew a right spirit within us and restore us to the joy of your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The almighty and merciful Lord grant us pardon and forgiveness of all our sins, time for amendment of life, and the grace and strength of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Hymn: At the name of Jesus

The Collect

Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people; that they, plentifully bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by you be plentifully rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Ephesians 1:15-23

Hymn: The Servant King

Second Reading: Matthew 25:31-46

Reflection

Today's Gospel reading may seem to be a little out of sequence - we have arrived at the last Sunday of readings in Saint Matthew's Gospel about Christ's days in Jerusalem immediately after Palm Sunday. We are preparing for Christmas, you may think, not for Easter. But we forget that so easily. On our television chat shows people are already talking about this being the Christmas Season ... before Advent has even started. But Advent is the season of preparation for Christmas, and in the weeks beforehand we even prepare for Advent itself, with Lectionary readings reminding us about what the coming of Christ into the world means, what the Kingdom of God is like, and how we should prepare for the coming of Christ and the coming of the Kingdom of God.

We have made Christmas a far-too comfortable story. The reality, of course, is that Christmas was never meant to be a comfortable story like that. Christmas is a story about poverty, about people who are homeless and rejected, a messy story about a child born amongst dirty animals, a story of shepherds who are involved in dangerous work, staying up all night, out in the winter cold, watching out for wolves and sheep stealers, a story of trickery, deceit of a political power that eventually leads to a cruel dictator stooping to murder, innocent children, to secure his own grip on power. However, these images do not sell Christmas Cards.

Putting the Christmas trees up too early or hanging up the lights and frosting the windows ahead of Advent do not help to encourage a true Christmas spirit because they help us forget what Advent is all about. Marking the Sunday before Advent by crowning Christ as King helps us to focus on Advent, time to pause and reflect on why, over the past few months, we have been following Christ on his journey to Jerusalem, where he will be revealed in glory as the Son of Man as the King and as Lord.

This is what our Gospel reading is telling us, it forces us to ask what the coming of Christ, the second coming, will be like, and what Christ has to say to us about the way we live and the way we should be living in the world today.

The division of people into sheep and goats is well known. We all constantly love to divide people into two groups, the insiders and the outsiders, us and them. Sheep and goats behave differently - Goats are lively animals and very curious. They are happy living either in herds with other goats or by themselves, while sheep are more docile, easily led, and always stay in groups. Sheep are greedier than goats - they are destructive grazers, while goats are browsers. Goats are among the best climbers in the world: they almost never fall or slip, while sheep, on the other hand, are much less sure-footed and can easily fall and get stuck upside down.

We all know the parable of the lost sheep, but the parable of the lost goat just would not have had the same resonance, would it? Sheep, however can and will stay out all night, and are more resilient in bad weather, which is why the shepherds on that first Christmas were out on the hillsides looking after their flocks. Goats, on the other hand, need warmth at night, so might even have been in the stable alongside the ox and the ass. So, sheep are outsiders, goats are insiders.

The gospel story opens with Christ coming again in glory, sitting on his throne of glory with all the nations gathered before him asking very searching questions - questions that are directly related to the conditions that surrounded that first Christmas; questions that directly challenge us as to whether we have taken on board the values of the beatitudes in the Sermon on the

Mount, questions that ask whether we really accept the values Christ proclaimed at the very start of his ministry when he spoke in the synagogue in Nazareth

The questions posed here are questions put to us not just as individuals and as Christians but also questions that are put to all nations.

And that is where Christ comes into the world, both at Christmas and at the second coming, with the Kingdom of God. At his birth, the old man in the Temple, Simeon, welcomes him as the light for revelation to the nations

Which nations on earth, at this very moment, would like to be judged by how enlightened they are, to be compared with the Kingdom of God when it comes to how each nation treats and looks after those the enthroned Christ identifies with himself: those who are hungry; those who are thirsty; those who are strangers and find no welcome on our shores; those who are naked, bare of anything to call their own in this world, those who are sick, and left waiting on hospital trolleys or on endless lists for health care because they cannot afford it; those who are imprisoned because they spoke out, or because they are from the wrong political or ethnic group.

In his Second Coming, Christ tells us the kind of conduct, of morality, towards others that is expected of us as Christians, but also tells us of the consequences of not caring for others. This Gospel reading challenges us in a way that is uncomfortable, but with things that must stay on our agenda as Christians and on the agenda of the Church.

As we prepare for Christmas, let us remember the reason we have Christmas, the reason Christ came into the world, and the reason he is coming again. Let us also look forward to seeing him in glory and be prepared to see him in the hungry, the thirsty, the unwelcome stranger, those who are naked and vulnerable, those who have no provisions for health care, those who are prisoners, those who have no visitors and those who are lonely and marginalised.

The Creed

We say this simple Creed, the faith we share with Christians everywhere.

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.

We believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hymn: In Christ there is no east or west

Prayers

We pray to our Everlasting God, through our Saviour Jesus who is both Christ the King and the Son of Man and who understands our needs and the needs of this world.