

**Resources on the Sunday Readings
Christ the King – Sunday Next Before Advent
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Picture Reflection – prepared by Brenda



**King of compassion
Matthew 25: 31-46**

- What do you like about the image?
- How does it reflect what happened in the first lockdown for Covid-19?
- How did each of us show care and appreciation?
- How has the second lockdown been different in people's response?
- How is our church community showing compassion now and what can we do in the future?

Reflect on the words taken from Sydney Carter's hymn...

When I needed a neighbour, were you there, were you there?

I was hungry and thirsty, were you there, were you there?

I was cold, I was naked were you there, were you there?

When I needed a shelter, were you there, were you there?

When I needed a healer, were you there, were you there?

And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, were you there?

Introduction To The Theme prepared by Brenda **Matthew 25: 31-46**

Today, the Church is celebrating Christ the King. What images come to mind when we think of kings? Do we think of wealth, authority and power? Compassion might not be at the top of the list of characteristics of earthly kings, but Christ the King is a King of compassion.

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Matthew's gospel we have the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus outlined the behavioural expectations for those who were privileged to live in God's kingdom. He emphasised that those who showed the qualities of compassion would be blessed.

The parable in our reading this morning comes towards the end of his ministry just before his Passion. This parable tests whether his followers had listened to and followed his teaching.... were they compassionate sheep or were they goats who were care-less of their fellow human beings?

We are faced with the shocking reality of the separation of the sheep and the goats.... a message for us as well as his first followers.

This parable has been at the heart of Christian involvement in social reform and community development down the ages. Today, for example it is seen in the work of the Samaritans, Age UK, Food Banks and the Refugee Council amongst many other organisations.

What particular agents of compassion have we seen in our community during the Covid-19 pandemic?

We have to remember that showing compassion is displayed in people of all faiths and of no faith...we are all God's children!

Bible Study prepared by Linda
Ephesians 1:15-23 & Matthew 25:31-46

NEW TESTAMENT READING - Ephesians 1:15-23

Context:

We are presented with conventional terms to describe the greatness of God: glory, wisdom, riches, immeasurable greatness, rule, authority, power and dominion. This is surely shaped by the world in which Paul was trying to lead and guide the fragile new community of the church: a world ruled by emperors and kings who had no hesitation in exercising violence to secure their position. Everyone knew their place in that world. But Paul is also concerned to demonstrate that the 'God of our Lord Jesus Christ' exercises power in a different way. God's power brings enlightenment and hope and is exercised on behalf of those who are the church. This ruler (or shepherd) acts always in the interests of those who are followers (or part of the flock). The mention of 'the age to come' connects us right into this week's Matthew text.

¹⁵ I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²²And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

- *In this passage, Paul has turned from praise for spiritual blessing to thanksgiving and prayer. His prayer is that Jesus' followers would continue to get to know God better. How do you think we are given 'a spirit of wisdom and revelation' to do this today?*
- *What would you say is 'the hope to which he has called you'?*
- *There is a link between v20 and the phrase in Ephesians 2:6 'and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places **in Christ Jesus**'. What does it mean to be 'in Christ'?*
- *Paul uses the phrase 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ'. What do you think that means in relation to Paul's understanding of the Trinity? Or your understanding of the Trinity?*

GOSPEL - Matthew 25:31-46

Context:

It seems reasonable, at least on the basis of the use of the word (translated as) 'blessed' (v34) and its opposite, 'accursed' (v41), to consider this passage as an appropriate bookend to the Beatitudes in Matthew 5. We could therefore treat this passage as the conclusion of the ministry of Jesus before he enters into the Passion narrative. Both the Matthew 5 text and this one concern themselves with the actions that merit reward from the king. Since the Gospel of Matthew is interested in 'The Way' of a disciple, perhaps this is then a good conclusion to the teachings of Jesus.

³¹ 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." ⁴¹Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." ⁴⁴Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" ⁴⁵Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'

- *Jesus uses the analogy of sorting sheep from goats. What is your understanding of the differences between sheep and goat – either literally or metaphorically?*
- *What is the more important difference between the two sorted groups?*
- *The phrase 'just as you did it to one of the least of these who are **members of my family**' suggests that Jesus is only talking about giving aid to needy Christian disciples. How does this fit in with a more liberal humanitarian concern?*
- *Do you think our actions should be 'conscious' or 'instinctive'?*
- *What do you understand by the phrases 'eternal punishment' and 'eternal life'?*

All Age Activity

The BE KIND & DO GOOD Advent Calendar

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
						
2 Give compliments to all your friends	3 <i>Pick up some litter in your community</i>	4 Hold the door open for someone else	5 Do an extra chore to help at home.	6 <i>Smile at everyone you see today</i>	7 Donate your old clothes to charity	8 Help to make lunch or dinner
9 <i>Write an encouraging note and leave it to be found.</i>	10 Let someone stand in front of you in a line.	11 <i>Write a thank-you note to someone who helps you learn.</i>	12 <i>Clean or Tidy an area in your house</i>	13 <i>Write / Draw something cheerful on the pavement with coloured chalk</i>	14 <i>Take your old toys to a Charity Shop</i>	15 <i>Share something special with someone else</i>
16 Tell a funny joke to someone	17 Donate food to the local food bank	18 <i>Give someone you love a tight hug</i>	19 Tell your parents you love them	20 Clean your bedroom. Santa likes a clean room	21 <i>Write down 5 things you are grateful for</i>	22 Make and write a Christmas card for a nursing home.
23 Make a home-made gift for Mum and Dad	24 Make sure you use your best manners all day	25 				

An active Advent calendar to explore ways of expressing compassion

Print or photocopy a 6 x 4 grid onto A4 sheets of coloured paper. With reference to today's Gospel reading, think of 24 things that you might do to express compassion to others, writing one in each space on the grid. You are invited to work your way through the sheet during December – ideally one action each day.