

# LIVERPOOL PARISH CHURCH

OUR LADY & ST NICHOLAS

## **Worship at home for the Christ the King**

**22<sup>nd</sup> November 2020**

*Find yourself a quiet, comfortable space that will allow your heart, mind and soul to focus on prayer and contemplation. You can pray these words out loud, quietly, in your head, or using a mixture of these approaches – whatever suits you best.*

*If you have a candle light it, and/or you can use a cross, crucifix, icon, or something else that gives you a visual focus to aid your time of prayer to, and worship of, Jesus Christ, the light of the world, the way, and the truth and the life.*

*Spend some time thinking about the past week, and bring before God anything that is troubling you, that you feel has challenged you, and that you feel you want God's help and guidance with. Then pray:*

**Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy.**

**Grant, we beseech you, merciful Lord, to your faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve you with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*Gloria in Excelsis*

**Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.  
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,  
we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.  
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.  
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.**

Pray today's collect:

**God the Father,  
help us to hear the call of Christ the King  
and to follow in his service,  
whose kingdom has no end;  
for he reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, one glory. Amen.**

*Now read through these passages from The Bible:*

**Ezekiel 34.11-16, 20-24**

For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.

**Ephesians 1.15-end**

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I 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, so 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, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God 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, far 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. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

**Matthew 25.31-end**

'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. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then 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; for 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, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then 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? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw

you sick or in prison and visited you?” And 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.” Then 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; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I 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.” Then 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?” Then 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.” And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’

*Spend some time thinking about the Bible readings. Here are some ideas you might want to reflect on in your prayers. Perhaps focus on one or two of the below:*

- The idea of God as shepherd is an ancient one, and one that occurs throughout the Old and New Testament. The passage in Ezekiel takes this idea, and wields it to offer great comfort. The section that is most telling to me is, “I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.” The use of the word “will” is key here. God does not sometimes search for us, sometimes reach out to us, sometimes hold us close. God always does these things. It is not a question of “may” or “may not” but will. God shows up, and it is up to us to respond. Take a moment - or a few moments - in silence to listen, to open yourself up to the reality that God is reaching out to you at this very moment. God’s comfort is all-encompassing, even if it can sometimes be hard to detect.
- The passage in Ephesians provides comfort in a second way. Instead of offering comfort in this world, it offers the comfort of knowing that God will be with us in the next. God’s actions in our lives are not limited by time, but instead are everlasting. Really embodying this truth leads to nothing less than enlightenment in this life. In prayer, imagine the heavenly places to which God will take you. Try to look beyond standard white-marble-and-gold depictions of Heaven, and think about what existence would be like in perfect love. What do our relationships with each other and with God look like in a state of perfect love?
- In the final reading, Jesus offers very clear criteria for a righteous life: feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick etc. Included here is no mention of whether or not these people are deserving. Instead, anyone who is needy should have their needs met. Interestingly, the sheep do not even know that their actions are righteous. Their actions are so embedded into their lifestyle that they cannot possibly live any other way. There is no division for them between charitable actions done on the side and their normal life. Instead, their personal, professional, political, and spiritual lives are all plaited together. In prayer, reflect on your life, and any places where there is dissonance between what you believe is right and what you are actually doing. Ask God how you can reorient your life towards the goodness of the world around you. Ask too for God’s help with this process.
- Finally, all three passages include the idea of punishment. What does it mean for the cruel sheep of Ezekiel, the non-saintly of Ephesians, and the goats of Matthew? In

Matthew especially, we have to ask how an all-loving God be so severe, especially with mortals who are guilty only of negligence. Perhaps the punishments here are metaphorical. Perhaps the fires are ever-burning but mortals do not spend eternity in them. Perhaps not. There are many Christian views about punishment. What view strikes you as most true, most just, and most loving? Ask in prayer what view God is pointing you towards?

*Now spend some time in your own prayers. You may want to pray and give thanks for:*

- The Church across the world, and the communities that it serves
- All those who are physically, emotionally or spiritually isolated
- All those who are facing the fear of death, their own, or that of a loved one
- All medical, nursing, caring and support staff, and emergency responders around the world
- All businesses, business owners, industries and employees who are facing loss and change at this time of uncertainty
- Marginalised communities, the homeless, asylum seekers, and all those who are especially vulnerable at this time
- Essential service providers, frontline workers, volunteers, and charitable supporters
- Those named on the Parish prayer list from the Sunday service booklet which you can download from the “This Week” page of our website ([https://www.livpc.co.uk/whats\\_on/this\\_week.html](https://www.livpc.co.uk/whats_on/this_week.html))

*Then finish with your own prayers and intercessions with the 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.**

*If you have a candle, put it out when you end this time of worship, but perhaps keep your sacred space set up, so that you can use it whenever you need to, and keep the Bible readings and prayer for the week, praying, reading, reflecting and thinking about them over the next seven days.*

*The clergy and community of Liverpool Parish Church are praying for you, your family, our city, our country, and our world.*