

This week we celebrate Christ the King

Come and worship the Lord Jesus, King of kings, yet servant of all.

Come with your dreams, your longings, your hopes, and all those on your hearts today, to seek blessing and healing. God, we have been a scattered people, roaming, looking for places to call home. You have called us home, gathered us in, given us a land of belonging where all are welcome. You have sought us out, brought us in, and held us in this great story. **Amen.**

Dear God, where we have been blind to the needs of others: **forgive us.**

Where we have been slow to take responsibility for our actions: **forgive us.**

Where we have not taken judgement seriously: **forgive us.**

Forgive us and give us your peace. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Sing or read:

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|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Crown him with many crowns,<br>the Lamb upon his throne.<br>Hark ! how the heavenly anthem drowns<br>all music but its own.<br>Awake, my soul, and sing<br>of him who died for thee,<br>and hail him as thy matchless King<br>through all eternity.            | 3 | Crown him the Lord of life,<br>who triumphed o'er the grave,<br>and rose victorious in the strife<br>for those he came to save.<br>His glories now we sing,<br>who died, and rose on high;<br>who died, eternal life to bring,<br>and lives, that death may die.         |
| 2 | Crown him the Son of God,<br>before the worlds began ;<br>and ye who tread where he has trod,<br>crown him the Son of Man,<br>who every grief has known<br>that wrings the human breast,<br>and takes and bears them for his own,<br>that all in him may rest. | 4 | Crown him the Lord of peace,<br>whose power a sceptre sways<br>from pole to pole, that wars may cease,<br>absorbed in prayer and praise.<br>His reign shall know no end,<br>and round his piercèd feet<br>fair flowers of paradise extend<br>their fragrance ever sweet. |
|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 5 | Crown him the Lord of love;<br>behold his hands and side —<br>rich wounds, yet visible above,<br>in beauty glorified.<br>All hail, Redeemer, hail!<br>for thou hast died for me;<br>thy praise and glory shall not fail<br>throughout eternity.                          |

Matthew Bridges (1800–1894) and Godfrey Thring (1823–1903)  
Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 347

Matthew 25.31-46: “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."

**We stand before God's throne beside those in every kind of need.**

**Thank you, Lord, that we do not stand alone with no-one to help us.**

**As we bring our own needs before you, help us to be gracious in accepting the care and help of others.**

**Make us more aware of the practical needs and more courageous in putting our faith into practice in acts of kindness. Amen**

Reflection: A few years ago, when I was on sabbatical, I spent 35 days on a silent retreat. Where I completed the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. St Ignatius of Loyola was a Spanish priest and theologian who founded the Jesuit order in 1534. Known for its missionary, educational, and charitable works, the Jesuit order was a leading force in the modernizing of the Roman Catholic Church.

As part of this retreat I had to complete the 'Two Standards' (flags) meditation. This was done over 24 hours. Ignatius deemed that there is a battle between good and evil going on in the world and in our hearts. It is important that we are aware of this battle. In this meditation, we were instructed to imagine the armies of Christ and Satan in a big field. Each group has a standard or flag, which helps everyone know their position on the battlefield.



Which Standard do you choose to stand under? Satan starts by getting us to fixate on our possessions. He wants our wealth and possessions to become the focus of our lives and worldly success to be the goal of our lives.

Evilness whispers to us that we need the praise and acceptance of others, and tells us that because of our successes, we deserve honours. Finally, he tries to convince us that we did it by ourselves. He tells us to be proud of what we have accomplished. He wants us to adopt the attitude of "look at me and what I have done."

On the other hand, Ignatius gets us to consider Christ as he stands on the great field in a lowly place. We are to listen as Christ instructs his followers to go out into the world and lead everyone to freedom. Under Christ's standard we see spiritual poverty, insults, and humility. These lead to true freedom. It's not however, as easy as it sounds! To stand under Christ's flag, is to be a soldier of Christ, which means to accept the same 'pay and rations.' The same conditions as Christ, the leader of our army. It is a big ask of anyone. Just think of what is most precious to you. Go on take some time to consider.....The rest of this wordship can wait. You could even give yourself 24hours, like I had.

In fact, I took 48 hours to complete this Spiritual Exercise, as my retreat leader made me do it all over again. Why you may ask? I will confess it was because I was angry. As I meditated

on what it meant to be under Christ's Standard to sacrifice all that was important to me, I felt resentful. I thought of the four years I had spent at Theological college in Bristol while my husband Richard, back in Portsmouth, looked after our three Children alone. During that time, I missed all their birthdays, parents' evenings at school, school proms and many other events and celebrations. One of the things I used to think about while I was away was... 'One day we will all be back together as a family of five.' I found some comfort in this thought. However, we never were back as a family of five. By the time I had finished my training, our two sons had gone off to University never to return home. As a mother I had sacrifice those precious years with my family. I questioned why had standing under Christ's Standard cost me so much? I was livid. Yes, you could say I was cross with God. Yes, of course serving God is a privilege, but serving His church was hard. Before going on the retreat, I had several years trying to help and support a divided congregation. There had been many difficult meetings I had to Chair. Many challenging and demanding situations I had to try and resolve. Backlash and criticisms, I had to deal with. There were moments when I thought of the four years I had given up, away from my family.... 'was it worth it'...? To Chair such meetings to be involved in such situations in the church, was it worth it? I will tell you, there were many times I thought that it had not been worth it! By the end of the retreat however, I came to appreciate that I had given Christ and His Church the most precious gift I had. The people who I valued the most, which was my family who I love dearly. To be resentful of the gift I had given would be to devalue the sacrifice. To serve Christ who had given his life for me, yes, He should have my most costly gift.

We are called to a life of selflessness, and such a life will put us at odds with the world, which could result in insults and rejection. Finally, Christ calls us to a life of humility, a life of unconditional love and service for God and others.

The purpose of this meditation is to help us understand the value systems of Christ and the 'Tempter' and to see which value system we are living. Periodically, we need to look at our lives to see where we are standing in relation to the standards of Christ and the Tempter. If we find that we have drifted a little closer to the other standard, we can strive to live a life of spiritual poverty by serving others through humble love and compassion. Remember we are called to live in this world but be of God's world. So, whose standard are you standing under?

We stand before God's throne beside those who suffer sickness and disease, who live with physical, mental, or emotional pain.

We pray for their families, friends, and all whose are called to bring healing, that they may see beyond the symptoms to see as you see and love as you love.

Lord, open our eyes. **Lord, open our eyes to see you in the members of your family.**

We stand before God's throne beside those of all nations and their leaders.

We pray for compassion in our life together,

that justice tempered with mercy may guide those who make and uphold our laws.

Lord, open our eyes. **Lord, open our eyes to see you in the members of your family.**

We stand before God's throne, beside the whole church of God

We give thanks for the many examples of your care and compassion put into practice.

We pray that we may stand with confidence before your throne with all who have lived by faith and have witnessed to your great love.

**Lord, open our eyes. Lord, open our eyes to see you in the members of your family. Amen.**

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

Sing or Read:

- 1 From heaven you came, helpless babe,  
entered our world, your glory veiled,  
not to be served but to serve,  
and give your life that we might live.  
*This is our God, the Servant King,  
he calls us now to follow him,  
to bring our lives as a daily offering  
of worship to the Servant King.*
- 2 There in the garden of tears  
my heavy load he chose to bear ;  
his heart with sorrow was torn,  
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said.
- 3 Come see his hands and his feet,  
the scars that speak of sacrifice,  
hands that flung stars into space  
to cruel nails surrendered.
- 4 So let us learn how to serve  
and in our lives enthrone him,  
each other's needs to prefer,  
for it is Christ we're serving.

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**Dear Lord, I am both sheep and goat, loving and selfish, caring, and complacent.  
Take the best of me, and shape it into that which can serve you and my community  
with more passion, more commitment, and more humility,  
knowing my frailties but rejoicing in your strength. Amen.**

The Blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, be with you, with those you love and with those you ought to love, this day and forever more. Amen

