

## TAKE TIME OUT – *Pastoral Retreat*

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### **Sunday Scriptures: 21<sup>st</sup> November 2021**

#### **CHRIST the KING**

**Scriptures:** NRSV

**Daniel 7:9-14** *Judgement before the Ancient One*

<sup>9</sup>As I watched, thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One took His throne, His clothing was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool; His throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire. <sup>10</sup>A stream of fire issued and flowed out from His presence. A thousand thousands served Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending Him. The court sat in judgement, and the books were opened. <sup>11</sup>I watched then because of the noise of the arrogant words that the horn was speaking. And as I watched, the beast was put to death, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. <sup>12</sup>As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. <sup>13</sup>As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And He came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. <sup>14</sup>To Him was given dominion and glory and Kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and His Kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.

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**Reflection:** *The TRUE King!*

The Sunday before Advent is devoted to reflecting on Jesus as the ultimate King who rules over all the earth. It is also the first signpost to reflecting on the dichotomy of Christ's birth and Christ's return throughout Advent. We are encouraged to welcome new life and new beginnings and challenged by living in an ever changing world and the reality of our mortality. In all this is a King who has shared our human weaknesses, and yet demonstrated how to overcome them. Through Jesus Christ we have an example and a way to follow that leads to our ultimate heavenly home beyond our life here on earth. This is our choice to make in the contradiction of life and death; there are no grey areas, only two paths to take. The one leads to light and life and eternal love; the other leads to darkness and death and eternal suffering. *What is our understanding of Christ the King? Perhaps we are following His example, perhaps we are not? Where will the path we are currently treading lead?*

Daniel describes a most wonderful vision; an 'Ancient One' dazzling white takes up His fiery throne on flaming wheels; God Almighty! The fire of His presence is flowing out from Him and His court is sitting in judgement. The portrayal of the divine court builds on the traditions of Hebrew Scripture and Godly governance. God who assigns power to kingdoms will himself judge those kingdoms at the end of our earthly time. The books have been opened and all is revealed, every good deed and every sinful act is written down in them, black on white, for all to see. There are many times in our journey of life that we would do well to stop and ask ourselves, what if my Mum or Granny were there watching and listening, would I still say or do what I have in mind! Daniel saw God judging millions of people as they stood before Him and our time will come when we stand before Almighty God and all the saints to give account of our lives. At that point, excuses and reasoned arguments will not cut it! Nothing is hidden from Christ the King and God has always been present; watching and listening to everything we ever thought, said or did. *What might be revealed in the book of our life? How might our story be received in the court of the Ancient One? What might God's judgement be?*

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Daniel sees ‘One like a human being’ presented to the ‘Ancient One’ and given everlasting dominion over all and a Kingship that is everlasting and cannot ever be destroyed. This is the ‘Son of man’, the Messiah in human and mortal form. He is the King who will rule over the entire world. Many books have been written and films made of those who would rule the world! Even during my life-span I have seen many characters and cults come and go believing and proclaiming that they would rule the world. However, they all come to a sticky end eventually because there is only One True King, Jesus Christ our Lord! Daniel’s vision describes a King like no other, a human being that is born out of heaven, has conquered sin and death, and returns to earth with all the authority of God. This King comes in glory and has dominion over ‘all peoples, nations and languages’, which are now charged to serve Him. His Kingdom will not perish in the same way as all other earthly kingdoms; it cannot be destroyed and will never end. The Kingdom of Christ the King will reflect God’s eternal glory, power and love for all peoples because, as Jesus told us, He is the ‘Son of Man’ the Messiah (Luke 21:27; John 1:51). *What visions of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit do we have? Do we look to our King Jesus to rule or are we trying to usurp His throne? Are we in the business of serving His Kingdom on earth or working against His authority?*

Those who stand on the Word of God and serve Christ the King remind me of a child’s toy, the fat wobbly figure, it doesn’t matter how many times we might try to knock it over, or how deviously we might try to hold it down. The wobbly figure always bobs right back up again every time. The Kingdom of Jesus Christ cannot be thwarted, no matter who or what tries, all plots schemes and conspiracies will come to nothing. God’s Kingdom on earth might wobble from time to time, but it can never be overcome or overthrown. Through Jesus Christ, our TRUE King, we are able to stand in the presence of God no matter what knocks or devious machinations we may experience. Daniel’s vision of the heavenly court, the books of life being opened and the Ancient One pronouncing judgement, reveals the order of our transition between this life and the next. As we follow Daniel’s visionary gaze towards God’s judgement, perhaps we should reflect on our own life, the good we have done, the bad we need to repent of, opportunities taken or missed, and the witness for Christ the King we portray. The full meaning of such visions and implications of such prophecies will not be known until God reveals them to His people. But if we wait until we are standing before God’s fiery throne to believe Jesus is the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Messiah and TRUE King it will surely be too late! *Will we be ready to give account on that day? Can we claim Jesus has and does rule our lives? Whose Kingship are we serving and to what end?*

If we take Scripture seriously, both Old and New Testaments, then Daniel’s vision must surely give us a sense of urgency! Now is the time, not tomorrow, to be inspired to sort ourselves out and get our own house in order according to God’s will and purpose. When Pilate asked Jesus, “What is Truth?”, and enquires further with another straightforward question, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus first replies with His own question, “Did this come out of your own understanding or someone else’s?” (John 18:33-38). What we believe to be Truth is not a matter for conjecture but rather a matter of life or death! Who we believe to be the King over God’s people is not a matter for debate but rather a matter of faith. We know when Jesus came; we have knowledge of His life among us and a record of what He proclaimed, we cannot profess to be ignorant! What we do not know is when Christ the King will return to claim His Kingdom and rule the earth.

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May God have mercy on us and guide us in the ways of Truth, justice and righteousness all the days of our life. **Amen!**

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As I was reflecting on what hymn to choose for this week's Sunday Scripture, it struck me how far short we fall in our love for Jesus and each other, our respect for God and stewardship of His Creation. The following hymn was written during the industrial revolution and the last line of the first verse starkly reflects the black polluting smoke belching out of the many factory chimneys of William Blake's world. How poignant it is for today and COP26 with all its political wrangling of world leaders vying for poll position. In the meantime the world continues to choke on human arrogance while the final day of judgement fast approaches. Daniel's vision was not merely spiritual but also physical and practical in challenging how we live and what we will be accountable for on that Day.

**Hymn/Song:** And Did Those Feet in Ancient Time (*Jerusalem*) *William Blake (1757-1827)*

And did those feet in ancient time  
Walk upon England's mountains green?  
And was the holy Lamb of God  
On England's pleasant pastures seen?  
And did the countenance divine  
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?  
And was Jerusalem builded here  
Among those dark satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!  
Bring me my arrows of desire!  
Bring me my spear! O clouds unfold!  
Bring me my chariot of fire!  
I will not cease from mental fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England's green and pleasant land.

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**Poem: CHRIST the KING** ©Janice Morgan-November 2021

King of Kings, Lord of Lords  
Light and life He affords  
Ancient One, enthroned on high  
He will arrive here by and by

On heavenly clouds, dressed in white,  
Pure as pure and dazzling bright  
The King takes up His throne of fire  
From which He flows like a flaming pyre

His court is full of righteousness  
His Truth reigns down to burn or bless  
The books of time are open wide  
There's nowhere for the beast to hide

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Whatever you have said or done  
Is known and judged by the Ancient One  
The time, the place, we do not know  
But our final place to us He will show

To heaven or hell He will send each one  
The Almighty God and His faithful Son  
For those who serve Him all will be well  
For those who do not the books will tell

This life is but a fleeting breath  
We're born, we live, then comes our death  
God knows our mind, our heart, our soul  
Which ending for us will the King's bell toll?

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**Prayer:** *can be prayed alone or by two voices or two halves of a congregation*

In Christ we have a King; **who holds a Shepherd's staff.**  
In Christ we have a King; **a Stranger among the known.**  
In Christ we have a King; **-serving the Word of God.**  
Our King serves us; **by washing our feet.**  
Our King serves us; **with a body broken in love.**  
Our King serves us; **from a wooden throne.**  
Christ is our King; **holds the poor and the needy.**  
Christ is our King; **gives His life for us all.**  
Christ is our King; **meets us here and now.**  
Let us worship the King of all Kings; **let us worship our Servant and Lord.**  
Father in heaven please help us; **Jesus please guide our path.**  
**Amen!**