

## **Worship at Home – 23 November 2025**

A short act of worship for use in people's homes prepared by Karen Frost

Welcome to Worship at Home. This Sunday in the liturgical/church year is known as Christ the King. It is the week before the first Sunday in Advent. I've been starting to prepare for all the church and community activities I'll be leading in the run up to Christmas Day in my different roles. I feel I missed out on the last two Christmases in church life as I was recovering from surgery, so although it is very busy, I'm delighted to be in that busyness, as we look towards Advent, starting next Sunday and travelling on to the Saviour's day in a few weeks' time.

### **Call to worship<sup>1</sup>**

As the darkness of winter draws in, as the coldest time of the year approaches, as we close our doors and turn up our heaters, Come, Lord of light, Come, God of the warm embrace, Come to us, Immanuel, God with us. Amen.

**Hymn:**        **STF 58 Lord I come before your throne of grace**    By Robert/Dawn Critchley  
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Lord, I come before Your throne of grace,  
I find rest in Your presence  
And fullness of joy,  
In worship and wonder  
I behold Your face,  
Singing what a faithful God have I,

Lord of mercy, You have heard my cry;  
Through the storm You're the beacon,  
My song in the night,  
In the shelter of Your wings,  
Hear my heart's reply,  
Singing what a faithful God have I,

*What a faithful God have I,  
What a faithful God,  
What a faithful God have I,  
Faithful in every way,*

Lord all sovereign, granting peace from  
heaven,  
Let me comfort those who suffer  
With the comfort You have given,  
I will tell of Your great love for as long as I  
live,  
Singing what a faithful God have I,

### **Prayers<sup>1</sup>**

Christ is King, alleluia! Christ is Saviour, alleluia! Christ reigns evermore, alleluia!  
Loving God, we come to you today to praise you and give thanks for all you have done for us as we come to the end of the liturgical year.

Thank you for the joyful songs we sing, for the prayers you hear and for blessing us with your word.

Jesus, let us praise you again for how you have worked in us this year, in ways both seen and unseen. Open our eyes and hearts once again today to your wisdom and love.

Gracious God, we come to you as imperfect people and pray that through our worship today, You will renew us to live out your calling to be Christ's servants once again.

Let us again be reminded of Jesus' life, from baby in a manger to death on a cross, from doubting disciples to ultimate ascension to the right hand of God, all rooted in unconditional love for all.

Prepare us once again as we gather to cry: Christ is King, alleluia! Christ is Saviour, alleluia! Christ reigns evermore, alleluia! Amen.

You may now wish to say out loud the **Lord's Prayer** in a language or version you prefer.

**Hymn:**        **STF 481 The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want**        by Stuart Townend  
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The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;  
he makes me lie in pastures green,  
he leads me by the still, still waters,  
his goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in you alone.  
and I will trust in you alone,  
for your endless mercy follows me,  
your goodness will lead me home.*

He guides my ways in righteousness,  
and he anoints my head with oil;  
and my cup - it overflows with joy,  
I feast on his pure delights.

And though I walk the darkest path -  
I will not fear the evil one,  
for you are with me, and your rod and staff  
Are the comfort I need to know.

**Reading:** Luke 23:33-43<sup>2</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The soldiers brought them to the place called the Skull. There they nailed Jesus to the cross. He hung between the two criminals. One was on his right and one was on his left. <sup>34</sup> Jesus said, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing." The soldiers divided up his clothes by casting lots.

<sup>35</sup> The people stood there watching. The rulers even made fun of Jesus. They said, "He saved others. Let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One."

<sup>36</sup> The soldiers also came up and poked fun at him. They offered him wine vinegar. <sup>37</sup> They said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

<sup>38</sup> A written sign had been placed above him. It read,  
This is the King of the Jews.

<sup>39</sup> One of the criminals hanging there made fun of Jesus. He said, "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself! Save us!"

<sup>40</sup> But the other criminal scolded him. "Don't you have any respect for God?" he said. "Remember, you are under the same sentence of death. <sup>41</sup> We are being punished fairly. We are getting just what our actions call for. But this man hasn't done anything wrong."

<sup>42</sup> Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

<sup>43</sup> Jesus answered him, "What I'm about to tell you is true. Today you will be with me in paradise."

### **Reflection<sup>3</sup>**

I wonder if you've ever heard of the principle of Universal Design, a term first coined in the 1980s. Universal Design is all about how to make our world accessible for all, but in a fresher way that not only makes more sense, but is more inclusive. Too much of our world has and is still designed for the 'average' person who doesn't exist meaning so much is suitable for so few. Universal Design calls for us to carefully consider what needs our buildings and spaces might need to fill before being built. The problem isn't the people who can't access our spaces, it's that our spaces aren't designed to cater to the greatest number of people. We identify the problems that people might have in our spaces, and design our spaces in a way that caters to those problems and allows for variability, so people can adjust the space to their needs. Many buildings have lights operated by adjustable switches, so lights can be dimmed rather than simply turned on and off. Fighter pilots have adjustable cockpit seats.

In the 1960s the dropped curb was designed, allowing wheelchair users to move between the pavement and the road without having to hop precariously over the curb - a pioneering development, with an unintended consequence. It soon became clear it was also useful for parents with prams, cyclists and delivery people. This is Universal Design at its best; creating a space that is fully accessible benefits everyone.

The former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams described the mission of Jesus. He wrote that Jesus came and lived among us so that all could encounter God, "under a clear sky". Jesus came to reset some very entrenched thinking about who was and was not worthy, to counter the

image of a vengeful, inaccessible God that many people carried, and to remind people that pretty faith without meaningful action was useless. Jesus' teaching was designed to reframe humankind's relationship with God, and remove everything that was preventing us from encountering a God of infinite love. God's love is, at its heart, universally designed. God has considered everything that might stand in between our relationship, and showers us with love that is truly for all. It's big enough, wide enough, challenging enough, comforting enough, tough enough, soft enough, majestic enough and personal enough to cater for our every need on any given day of our lives. We can approach God day to day with all the variability of a thoughtfully designed seat in a cockpit, knowing we can come as we are and find a God who will listen to us whether we want to speak aloud, sing, scream or say nothing at all. God is truly accessible to anyone who wants that relationship, regardless of language, faith, worshipping practices and individual needs.

Yet, despite God's best efforts, there are still people in our world who feel disconnected, who feel they can't or don't want to be reached. As humans, we're a little too good at erecting barriers. Jesus came to tear down the barriers, and yet barriers still exist. Our church buildings are often choked by tradition, forcing people who cross our thresholds for the first time to adapt to how we've always done things in order to feel welcome.

Our unwillingness to accept our doubt as a healthy part of faith bars us from connecting with people through shared vulnerability. We read our Bibles with limited room for interpretation or criticism, leaving us preaching on time capsules rather than living, breathing texts.

As a result, the church can often appear out of touch with reality to those on the outside looking in. Even worse, the church often brands certain people 'sinners' on the evidence of ancient understandings and questionably translated texts, then devotes time and energy to trying to play God and 'save their souls' in a way that leads to shame and self-hatred. The countless instances of murder, war and genocide that have taken place throughout history supposedly 'in God's name' could reasonably also be considered a barrier to someone feeling that God is someone with whom they want a relationship.

The Passion passage from Luke 23 tells of a man cast out from society, treated as less than human by a justice system that is most definitely less than just. This man summons all his courage as he dares to ask Jesus to remember him in God's kingdom, and is met with the calmest of assurances. He is reassured that Jesus sees him and will remember his name; finally, after a lifetime of being ground down, rejected and seen as less than nothing, God is able to get through and shower him in transformational love.

What barriers do we, both as individuals and collectively as church communities, put in the way of others experiencing the love of God?

How do we get in the way of God reaching all people?

This isn't an easy question to answer, and requires us to do some deep soul searching.

Perhaps it calls upon us to question traditions that are older than we are, and step out of the comfort zone we've got rather used to. It's tough, but no work is more important. God wants all people to know love, and to feel truly seen.

How can we help to do the work of Jesus, allowing everyone to experience that love 'under a clear sky'?

**Hymn: STF 287 When I survey the wondrous cross** by Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 287

When I survey the wondrous cross,  
on which the Prince of Glory died,  
my richest gain I count but loss,  
and pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast  
save in the death of Christ my God;  
all the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to his blood.

See from his head, his hands, his feet,  
sorrow and love flow mingled down;  
did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

His dying crimson, like a robe  
spreads o'er his body on the tree;  
then am I dead to all the globe,  
and all the globe is dead to me.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
that were an offering far too small;  
love so amazing, so divine,  
demands my soul, my life, my all.

### Prayers for all God's people<sup>1</sup>

We come before you, Christ our King :the most surprising of kings. A king with thorns, rather than gold, for a crown. A king born not in a palace, but a manger, a king riding not on a noble steed, but on a donkey. A king who doesn't look down, but sits alongside us. Christ, our King: we know that you truly see us. We know that you hear us better than when we are speaking. We lay our worries at your feet.

Christ, our King: we ask for your comforting hand upon the shoulders of all who are in distress - for our siblings displaced by conflict, suffering the worst effects of climate change and separated from family. For those dealing with loneliness, anxiety, and facing the loss of a loved one. For those for whom the future feels particularly uncertain. For victims of all kinds of abuse, finding the strength to rebuild.

Christ, our King: we ask for your strength to be your hands and feet on the earth. Give us hearts that burn with your love. Be our guide as we seek to be your people of light. Help us never to give up hope. Christ, our King: hear our prayers. **Amen**

**Hymn: STF 63** Over all the earth, you reign on high by Brenton Brown  
Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 63

Over all the earth, you reign on high,  
every mountain stream, every sunset sky.  
But my one request, Lord, my only aim  
is that you'd reign in me again.

*Lord, reign in me, reign in your power  
over all my dreams, in my darkest hour.  
You are the Lord of all I am, so won't you reign  
in me again?*

Over every thought, over every word,  
may my life reflect the beauty of my Lord;  
'cause you mean more to me than any  
earthly thing,  
so won't you reign in me again?

### Blessing<sup>1</sup>

We go into our week, inspired by your message of inclusivity Lord God. We go to welcome all people, to make space for all things, we go to do all that we can, in the name of love. **Amen**

### Acknowledgements

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