Cheshire South Methodist Circuit
Worship at Home – Sunday 22nd November 2026
The Sunday before Advent: Christ the King

Call to worship
Jesus our King is coming to reign. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving and praise; to him be all honour and glory.

StF no. 317 *At the name of Jesus*

1 At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow
Every tongue confess him King of Glory now.
'tis the Father's pleasure we should call him Lord
Who from the beginning was the mighty Word.

2 Humbled for a season, to receive a name
From the lips of sinners unto whom he came,
Faithfully he bore it, spotless to the last,
Brought it back victorious when from death he passed.

3 Bore it up triumphant with its human light,
Through all ranks of creatures to the central height,
To the throne of Godhead, to the Father's breast;
Filled it with the glory of that perfect rest.

4 In your hearts enthrone him; there let him subdue
All that is not holy, all that is not true;
Crown him as your captain in temptation's hour
Let his will enfold you in its light and power.

5 For that same Lord Jesus shall return again,
With his Father's glory, with his angel train;
All the wreaths of empire meet upon his brow,
And our hearts confess him King of Glory now.

CCL 821965 Caroline Maria Noel

Prayers of thanksgiving and confession
Thank you, Lord God, for being at the heart of your creation. You judge what is right and wrong, but we need not despair over our shortcomings, for you are a shepherd to us. You gently bring us back when we stray. You put your loving arms around us when we are hurting. You strengthen us when we are weak. Thank you for your love in our lives and the security that gives us. Thank you, above all, for your abundant blessings, which we can pass on to those in any sort of need. Inspire us with your Holy Spirit that we may become the people you want us to be, to your greater glory. In the name of Jesus, **Amen**.
Dear Lord, forgive us especially for those times when we have failed to respond to the needs of the hungry, the sick and the lost. We are sorry that all too often we put ourselves first, turning a blind eye to those in need of help, then regret our self-serving deeds and words. Forgive us when we have not heeded the cries of those around us, and gone on our selfish way. In ignoring the least of your people, we have turned away from you.
And so we come to you now, Lord, trusting that you will forgive us once again. For your Son, Jesus Christ, came into the world to save sinners like us and, out of love, he gave up his life for us. We rely upon his Grace to make us whole, and upon your Spirit to guide us in the paths of righteousness. Praise be to our King and Saviour. **Amen**.

Readings: *Ezekiel 34: 11-16* and *20-24*
11 "'For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after
them. **12** As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my
sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and
darkness. **13** I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring
them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the
settlements in the land. **14** I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be
their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich

pasture on the mountains of Israel. 15 I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. 16 I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice…
20 "'Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says to them: See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. 21 Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, 22 I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. 23 I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. 24 I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken.

Matthew 25: 31- 46 The Sheep and the Goats

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'
37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'
40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' 41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' 44 "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' 45 "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' 46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Reflection Christ the Shepherd King

Text: 'Whenever you did this (to help) the least important members of my family, you did it for me.' (Matthew Chapter 25, verse 40)
This is the last Sunday before Advent, with Christmas only a month away, when we are invited to consider Christ as King, and I would like us to ask ourselves, what sort of king?
The reading from the Matthew's Gospel, which comes from the last chapter before his concluding account of Easter Week and the Resurrection, contains something of a courtroom drama: the Son of Man (Jesus) returns as King, sitting on his royal throne, and dividing the people of all nations into sheep and goats. This is a reference to the Final Judgement, taking place after Christ's Second Coming, which we are reminded of in Advent, as we prepare to celebrate his first coming, as a baby, at Christmas. Jesus the judge puts the righteous people on his right and the others to his left, the former destined for eternal life, the latter consigned to eternal punishment.
It's a sobering vision, which most people these days, in our society at least, prefer to ignore, yet Christians must take it very seriously. Matthew makes it clear, in the preceding Parable of the Talents (Chapter 25, verses 14-30), that we are accountable to God for the way we have conducted our lives. In that Parable it is a question of how, as servants of God, we have used the gifts we have been given for the benefit of our Master, serving others to his greater glory. We shall be condemned if we waste the talents we have been given. In today's passage, Christ the King decides who will be saved on the basis of how people have treated the least among them, feeding the hungry, giving a drink to the thirsty, welcoming strangers into their homes, clothing the naked, healing the sick and visiting those

in prison. As he famously says, in attending to the least important in your midst, you have actually been helping me.
Plenty to be doing in that regard! The point is that we are accountable to God for all that we do for others, or rather fail to do. It may not be fashionable to say so in our society, where self-satisfaction is all-important, and so much is on offer to fulfil every personal desire, but I believe that it is true. Now, I'm not suggesting that we can earn our way to Heaven by totting up our good deeds. Rather, if we truly believe in God's salvation, then we shall be empowered to undertake these tasks for his greater glory. It's a tall order and, as we run down the list, I'm sure that all of us could do more. I may do a fair bit of feeding the hungry by volunteering for Christian Aid, but I don't do much to welcome those asylum seekers who have recently come to Crewe, and I have never done any prison visiting …
It also gets harder as we get on in years and our energy begins to decline. Yet God wants each of us to contribute according to our own abilities. We can't all be like Mother Teresa or Gladys Aylward, devoting our whole lives to the service of others, but we can still give some of our income to good causes, or contact people who are poorly and aid their recovery with a sympathetic, encouraging word. Above all, we can pray for people who find themselves in these different sorts of need, either mentioning them by name, or putting them before God more generally. Just take a moment to think how you might do some of these things, or take other actions that are feasible for you, in your own particular situation.
The Lord knows our weaknesses, which is why he sent his Son, Jesus, to save us from ourselves. And the reference to sheep and goats in the passage from Matthew's Gospel (verse 32), suggests that he is a shepherd, as well as a judge, who cares deeply for his sheep. Indeed, the verses you have read from Ezekiel (Chapter 34), talks about God as the Good Shepherd, and invites us to see his triumphant Son later returning as a Shepherd King. This Old Testament passage assures us that God will take care of his scattered sheep and lead them to feed in verdant pastures. He will bandage up those that are hurt and heal those who are sick. The element of judgement remains upon those stronger sheep who have simply satisfied their own needs and desires, at the expense of others, but the weaker ones will be rescued and taken care of, in order to live for the Lord.
It is thus Jesus as a Shepherd King to whom we turn in confidence when he comes to judge our conduct. For those given the grace to live in righteousness and, seeking to serve God and others, can be assured that the verdict will be in their favour. And they will hear the words of Jesus that they have been longing for: 'Come you that are blessed by my Father! Come and possess the kingdom that has been prepared for you since the creation of the world.' **Amen**

StF no. 256 *When I needed a neighbour*

1 When I needed a neighbour,
Were you there, were you there?
When I needed a neighbour, were you there?
And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, were you there?

2 I was hungry and thirsty, were you there?
were you there?
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there?
And the creed….

3 I was cold, I was naked,
Were you there, were you there?
I was cold, I was naked, were you there?
And the creed….

4 When I needed a shelter,
Were you there, were you there?
When I needed a shelter, were you there?
And the creed….

5 When I needed a healer
Were you there, were you there?
When I needed a healer, were you there?
And the creed….

6 Wherever you travel
I'll be there, I'll be there
Wherever you travel I'll be there.
And the creed….

CCL 821965 Sydney Carter

Prayers of intercession
Let us pray that we may serve Christ the King in meeting the needs of others.
We pray for the hungry and thirsty in the world: for the victims of famine, drought, natural disaster and the disruption of war. We pray especially for the people of Gaza, who continue to live in appalling circumstances, and the people of Ukraine under continuing bombardment.
And let us pray for those without homes or shelter: for refugees, those thrown out of their accommodation, and those living on the street. We pray especially for asylum-seekers in Crewe, thankful for the welcome they are receiving in our town, from churches and voluntary organisations.

Then we would pray for those who are ill: for those with chronic or life-threatening conditions, for those who are sick in mind or spirit, and for those awaiting diagnosis or treatment. We pray in particular for those who known to us, among our families, friends and neighbours. Show us how we can bring them comfort and hope in such difficult times.

And we would also pray for those who are imprisoned: for criminals, and for prisoners of conscience, especially for those, in a growing number of countries, who have been locked up simply for following Christ. We pray too for those imprisoned by fear, guilt or addiction. Bring them release and help us to uphold them in their moments of trial and desperation.

Finally, we pray for ourselves, that we might always look to the needs of others, for in the name of Jesus, our Shepherd King, we seek to love and serve**. Amen**. In his words, we pray:

The Lord's Prayer

StF no. 185, *Sing we the King who is coming to reign*

1 Sing we the King who is coming to reign;
Glory to Jesus, the Lamb that was slain!
Life and salvation his empire shall bring,
Joy to the nations when Jesus is King:

Come let us sing: praise to our King,
Jesus our King, Jesus our King:
This is our song, who to Jesus belong:
Glory to Jesus, to Jesus our King.

2 All shall be well in his kingdom of peace;
Freedom shall flourish and wisdom increase;
Justice and truth from his sceptre shall spring;
Wrong shall be ended when Jesus is King:
Come let us sing: …

3 Souls shall be saved from the burden of sin;
Doubt shall not darken his witness within;
Hell has no terrors, and death has no sting;
Love is victorious when Jesus is King:
Come let us sing: …

4 Kingdom of Christ, for your coming we pray;
Hasten, O Father, the dawn of the day
When this new song your creation shall sing;
Satan is vanquished and Jesus is King:
Come let us sing: …

CCL 821965 Charles Silvester Horne

Benediction
May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and remain with us, always. **Amen**

This worship service has been prepared by Dr. Malcolm Crook