

A Devotion for the week to 22nd of November 2020 being 'Christ the King'

This service is written for Stretton Park and McDonald Wing in Maffra, Laurina Lodge in Heyfield, and Royal Freemason's in Sale but with the intention of being available for any who are interested for their private use.

INTRODUCTION

Christmas is coming! This is the last week of the Church's year. Next week will be the first week in Advent, the four week period of preparation for Christmas. This week we celebrate Christ as King.

HYMN No. 10 - Praise to the Lord, the almighty, the king of creation

You can read the words to yourself, or out loud. If you remember the tune well enough you can sing it yourself. You can, of course sing just the first, or the first and last verses.

PSALM 100 :

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness, come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures for ever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

PRAYER

Thank you O Lord that are with us and that you have been beside us, caring for us, our whole lives. With you, we know we are never alone. Your presence comforts us, your word guides us and your love inspires us. Thank you Lord for those memories we treasure of the times we could feel your presence with us. Thank you for those times when we were truly inspired by the message or actions of your people. And thank you for those times when we just knew that we were loved and cared for. Help us to treasure those special memories we have. Through Jesus Christ our Lord and King, Amen

HYMN No. 9 - Praise my soul the King of heaven

BIBLE READINGS : Ezekiel 34:11-16 & 20-24 and Matthew 25: 31-46

Today our Old Testament and Gospel readings are very similar, they both tell us of God being the shepherd-king. Like a shepherd of old, God knows each of His sheep and cares for them. God also judges the sheep, like sheep farmers always have done, keeping those that live up to expectations and taking the others out of the flock.

The way that a modern-day grazier relates to his sheep seems very different to the shepherds of old, but if you ask a Gippsland grazier about poddy lambs you will get an insight into the relationship between the sheep and shepherd in Biblical times. A poddy lamb is an orphan or a lamb that its mother can't care for. It is hand fed with a bottle, often by the grazier's children. These lambs often become quite tame and will generally come when the person who feeds them calls. My daughters have had three poddy lambs over the years, Betty, Barney and Buster. The shearers did not like them because they were not afraid of people and would fight back when they were being shorn; the shearers were strangers, the sheep did not trust them.

So, to imagine the Biblical shepherd and sheep, imagine a land with no fences. In this land an itinerant shepherd would lead his flock of perhaps 30 to 80 pet sheep. In good country, he may have just one sheep-fold. In poorer country he may have had a few sheep-folds, each a day's travel apart. Every day he would have led the flock out to the best feed and water at that time.

God cares for us in that sort of way, not as the modern grazier who might check his sheep by looking over the fence at them, but in the manner of the shepherd of old. God knows each one of us. God cares for each one of us. God wants what is best for each one of us. God does not judge us harshly, because His knowledge of us is complete and true. God's judgement is compassionate and forgiving. God sees our intentions and knows when we are really trying to do the right thing, even if it does not end the way we intended. Our Good shepherd is the God who loves us and knows us, the God we can trust and depend on.

HYMN No. 13 - The King of love my shepherd is

PRAYER

God our Father, thank you that we can trust you completely. Sometimes it is uncomfortable for us, that you know those things about us that we don't want others to know, but you know the best of us as well as the worst. Trusting in your compassion and mercy, we ask your forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Free us from our sins, we pray, and bring us true peace of mind.

We thank you for your care of us over the span of our lives and we ask for your continued love and care. We pray for the world, for those places where there is unrest and fighting, where there is poverty and famine, and where there is disease and death. We pray for our own country as we try to stay disease-free. Help those in administration and health care, and we ask that our government may continue in good works to help both the economy and the needy. We pray for ourselves that we would be able to enjoy our lives and do what we can to make life enjoyable for others.

All of these things we pray through Jesus Christ, and we pray together:

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. 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

HYMN No 23 - Nearer my God to Thee

The BLESSING

May the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

be upon you and remain with you always, Amen