

Christ the King Sunday

In his book, *You are What You Love*, James K.A. Smith said, "Liturgical tradition is the platform for imaginative innovation." (p.181) The cycles and rhythms we inhabit can serve as intentional moments of reflection on our shared human experience. For people of faith, recollecting God's story and our part in it invites a deeper engagement with opportunities for spiritual formation as we expand our imaginations into all that we have, and are, through Jesus Christ.



For those who align their faith practices with the Christian liturgical year, the Sunday before the beginning of Advent is Christ the King Sunday or The Feast of Christ the King. While this Sunday is the last on the Church calendar, it represents a highpoint of the year as the sovereign rule and reign of Jesus over all His creation is acknowledged and celebrated.

In anticipation of this concluding feast day, it is good to review the story of redemption and how annual celebrations re-tell that story. To begin, we open with the season of Advent during which we anticipate and welcome Jesus to dwell among us. Shortly after our Christmas Day festivities is Epiphany, a feast that highlights the Magi's visit to the Christ-child with emphasis on His divine qualities. Next, we enter the weeks of Lent and lament our desperate need for a Savior. The Lenten season ushers us to Resurrection Sunday when we celebrate that Savior and His conquest of sin and death. Fifty days later is Pentecost Sunday, which commemorates the gift of the Spirit and the birth of the Church. And the weeks outside the seasons of Christmas and Easter? Those are referred to as "Ordinary Time," not because they aren't important but because those weeks are numbered in sequence (i.e. ordinal). In fact, ordinary time is vital to our spiritual formation as those weeks present a daily opportunity to recognize and respond to God during the ordinary and extraordinary moments of our lives.

This yearly cycle and accompanying practices keep close the truth about who God is, what He's done, and what that means for us. When we rehearse God's plan to liberate His creation from sin and death, our imaginations are released to explore the wonder of salvation in new ways that expand our idea of God's Kingdom and our place in it.

So on Christ the King Sunday, when Ordinary Time concludes and we reset the Church calendar, we acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all things. We celebrate the hope we have to rule and reign with Him in the new Heavens and Earth. And while we wait for that second Advent of Jesus, we live as people whose faith impels and empowers us to foster goodness and beauty. To be caretakers of each other, as well as this Earth on which we dwell. To be peacemakers and truth tellers and lovers of all people by offering our gentle kindness in a spirit of humility. These are ways we honor our King.



Therefore, as part of Christ the King Sunday it is fitting to confirm, again, our allegiance to the King of Kings. To meditate on his power and promise to return and make everything right. We hold fast to that promise even as we also hold the injustice and pain that is present with us. Further, we can affirm our commitment to be whole-hearted followers of Jesus even as we struggle with our own temptations, apathy, anxiety, loss, disease, and troubled relationships.

Let's also admit that at times our relationship with God can be strained. Perhaps you've strayed from God and currently live with guilt, shame, or regret. Or maybe you feel distant, distracted, or discouraged with your spiritual experience. If so, you are not alone. Wherever you're at, in joy and in sorrow, Jesus says, "Come!" He is a benevolent, compassionate, patient, and merciful King. Trust Him to be that for you this day, whatever your circumstance. Submit yourself, again, to His loving Lordship over your life.

Pastor Paul David Tripp suggests, "The size of your hope is directly related to the level of your awe of God's care." (Awe, p.105) From a humble birth to taking His seat on the throne of Heaven, Jesus is our conquering King. He's our God who loves us with an everlasting, never leaving, with-you-no-matter-what kind of love. That kindness and care invites our repentance, obedience, and faith. So let's bolster and expand our hope, for the best is yet to come because of the One who rules over all things – King Jesus!

Below are passages of scripture, questions for prayer and meditation, and a song to assist your engagement with Christ the King Sunday and the celebration of Jesus as King.

Prompts for Reflection and Meditation

- As you review the liturgical year and the various feasts, celebrations, and remembrances, was there a day, season, or celebration this past year that was particularly impactful? Take time to reflect on that, inviting God into those reflections.
- What does it mean to give allegiance to someone? If you've given your allegiance to Jesus, how does (or should) this affect your behavior? Is there anything that needs to change?
- How would you describe your ability to wait on God, trusting His timing and perfect justice to make all things right? As you meditate on this question, ask the Spirit to reveal any ways you might struggle to relinquish control to the King of your life.
- Consider writing a prayer, maybe in the form of a Psalm of praise to Jesus as your King – and then joyfully offer it to Him!

Hope

Isaiah 25:6-9
(Contemporary English Version)

On this mountain
the Lord All-Powerful
will prepare for all nations
a feast of the finest foods.
Choice wines and the best meats
will be served.
Here the Lord will strip away
the burial clothes
that cover the nations.
The Lord All-Powerful
will destroy the power of death
and wipe away all tears.
No longer will his people
be insulted everywhere.
The Lord has spoken!

At that time, people will say,
"The Lord has saved us!
Let's celebrate.
We waited and hoped—
now our God is here."



The Supremacy of the Son of God

“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

Colossians 1:15-20 (New International Version)

Praise the Lord!

Psalm 146
(New International Version)

Praise the Lord.

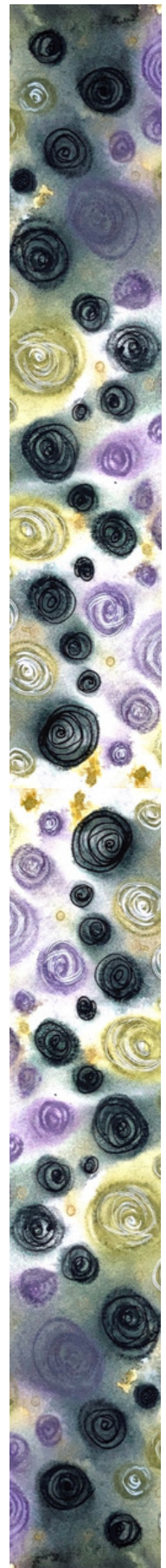
Praise the Lord, my soul.

I will praise the Lord all my life;
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.
Do not put your trust in princes,
in human beings, who cannot save.
When their spirit departs, they return to the ground;
on that very day their plans come to nothing.
Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord their God.

He is the Maker of heaven and earth,
the sea, and everything in them—
he remains faithful forever.
He upholds the cause of the oppressed
and gives food to the hungry.
The Lord sets prisoners free,
the Lord gives sight to the blind,
the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down,
the Lord loves the righteous.
The Lord watches over the foreigner
and sustains the fatherless and the widow,
but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

The Lord reigns forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Praise the Lord.



Running Hard

“But you, Timothy, man of God: Run for your life from all this. Pursue a righteous life—a life of wonder, faith, love, steadiness, courtesy. Run hard and fast in the faith. Seize the eternal life, the life you were called to, the life you so fervently embraced in the presence of so many witnesses.

I’m charging you before the life-giving God and before Christ, who took his stand before Pontius Pilate and didn’t give an inch: Keep this command to the letter, and don’t slack off. Our Master, Jesus Christ, is on his way. He’ll show up right on time, his arrival guaranteed by the Blessed and Undisputed Ruler, High King, High God. He’s the only one death can’t touch, his light so bright no one can get close. He’s never been seen by human eyes—human eyes can’t take him in! Honor to him, and eternal rule! Oh, yes.”

1 Timothy 6:11-16 (The Message)

Imitating Christ’s Humility

“If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don’t push your way to the front; don’t sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don’t be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.

Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn’t think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn’t claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.

Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth—even those long ago dead and buried—will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father.”

Philippians 2:1-11 (The Message)





King of Kings

Words and Music by Jason Ingram,
Brooke Ligertwood & Scott Ligertwood
© 2019 Hillsong Music Publishing
CCLI: 7127647

[\(link to music video\)](#)

VERSE 1

In the darkness we were waiting
Without hope without light
Till from heaven You came running
There was mercy in Your eyes

To fulfill the law and prophets
To a virgin came the Word
From a throne of endless glory
To a cradle in the dirt

CHORUS

Praise the Father
Praise the Son
Praise the Spirit three in one
God of glory
Majesty
Praise forever to the King of Kings

VERSE 2

To reveal the kingdom coming
And to reconcile the lost
To redeem the whole creation
You did not despise the cross

For even in Your suffering
You saw to the other side
Knowing this was our salvation
Jesus for our sake You died

VERSE 3

And the morning that You rose
All of heaven held its breath
Till that stone was moved for good
For the Lamb had conquered death

And the dead rose from their tombs
And the angels stood in awe
For the souls of all who'd come
To the Father are restored

VERSE 4

And the Church of Christ was born
Then the Spirit lit the flame
Now this gospel truth of old
Shall not kneel shall not faint

By His blood and in His Name
In His freedom I am free
For the love of Jesus Christ
Who has resurrected me

