

The Vine at Home
34th Sunday of Ordinary Time – Year B

May Christ our King reign over us,
his love inspire us,
his footsteps guide us,
his peace be with us.
May Christ our King reign over us, now and always.
Amen.¹

Opening Prayers

Find a comfortable space in your house, or wherever you are reading this. Sit down, if that's possible, and maybe grab a blanket and settle into a resting position.

You may like to close your eyes and try to simply focus on your breathing for a moment.

In the stillness, listen to the noises of the house around you. Perhaps you can hear the heating pipes, the creaks and groans of floorboards as others move around, the noises of outside coming in. Just be still and listen, for as long as you dare, or as long as time will allow.

In the stillness, perhaps you can also 'hear' your own internal thoughts whizzing around your head.

That's okay, simply acknowledge each thought as it comes, then try to come back to the stillness, to the listening, to your own rhythm of breathing in and out.

In the stillness, do not intend anything, do not seek for anything, do not perform anything.

Simply accept the presence of stillness.

Hold the stillness for as long as you can, or time allows.

When you are ready, you might like to say this simple prayer out loud:
Lord God, thank you for this space. Help me to create space to listen, space to be still, space for the small voices to speak.

In the stillness, come by your Spirit. Amen.²

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

You may now like to say the Lord's Prayer, in a tradition or language that is familiar to you.

Hymn: 180 StF, 85 H&P, 493 MP – O come, O come Immanuel

Readings: John 18:33-37

Reflections

It's nearly here friends! Next week is Advent Sunday, the beginning of the season of waiting, when we prepare for Christ's coming at Christmas. He is coming!

This Sunday, the one before Advent, is called in some traditions 'Christ the King', an invitation to reflect on the kingly nature of Christ's ministry here on earth, echoing Jesus' own reflections on what it means to be a king as he stands in Pilate's halls. This reading, coming just before we embark on the familiar Christmas story, also reminds us of the end of Jesus' ministry even as we are about to begin his story again.

This contrast helps us to sing 'O Come, O Come Immanuel', not just in a cosy, festive, Christmas-is-coming sort of way – but to recognise the miracle of Immanuel, God with us in all God's fullness. That miracle included and led to Jesus' betrayal by his own people and death on the cross, but also to the remarkable resurrection and recognition of Christ as King. This Sunday, we remember that the statement 'God with us', is a remarkable, life-changing truth, that takes us right to the heavenly throne in Revelation, where we sing 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty – who was, and is, and is to come.

Some questions to consider today, and discuss with those around you if and when you are able:

- To what extent do you find it helpful or not to think of Christ as 'King'?
- If Jesus is King, what does that mean for us, and how can we be involved in acknowledging and partaking in his 'kingdom' here on earth?
- In what ways are you preparing for the Advent season – are you able to make a space to listen, learn, pray and reflect in this time?

Prayers of intercession

We live in a world where price is often confused with value; as we bring our prayers for others today, we hold in our minds those on whom little value is sometimes placed, knowing that God's love for each one is immense:

Holy God, gentle and strong God, we pray today for babies and small children; those who live near to us, those who live far away in lands torn apart by war or famine, those who are sick...

Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

Holy God, gentle and strong God, we pray today for young people; those scarred by the past, those who fear the future, those whose lives have been disrupted in recent months and who feel lost...

Holy God, gentle and strong God, we pray today for all who are sick in body; people in our families with cancer or degenerative diseases, people near and far affected by the Coronavirus and other illnesses...

Holy God, gentle and strong God, we pray today for all who struggle to hold onto good mental health; friends living with depression, anxiety, addiction... and for ourselves in these times of uncertainty and fear...

Holy God, gentle and strong God, we pray today for all who are dying and those who have been recently bereaved; we know that your love is stronger than death – surround them with that love...

Holy God, gentle and strong God, we pray today for any who feel lost, abandoned, neglected or unvalued, for whatever reason... we know that you came to seek and to save the lost and we pray that they may know your gentle and strong love surrounding them at this time.

Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

Amen.³

Blessing

We will leave here, never the same again.

We will follow you, our God, into the week ahead.

We will go where you will lead us.

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us.

Amen.⁴

³ Prayers of intercession written by Jill Baker

⁴ Additional prayers by Tim Baker