



**Worship Service Theme: Service
(Christ the King Sunday: one week before Advent)**

Helpful elements:

White and/or gold table covering

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community today. My name is ____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. The Sunday before Advent is traditionally celebrated as Christ the King Sunday, a day that we focus on our love for God above all else.

This particular celebration was first added to the church liturgy in 1925 by the Roman Catholic Church ... in particular, as a response to the plight of Mexican Christians who were being told by their government that only their government was due ultimate allegiance. The Church in Mexico remained faithful, holding public parades throughout the land (with significant governmental pushback!) proclaiming "Christo Rey!" meaning "Christ is King!"¹

The colors for today, representing the kingship of God, are white and gold. Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence joyfully and reverently, and let us depart today with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace which passes understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology

Statement of Faith: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23 together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

¹ <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/christ-the-king-sunday-2017-preaching-notes>

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Suggested Hymns:

For the Beauty of the Earth

Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

Amazing Grace

First reading: Ezekiel 34:11f

For thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered. ... I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice. ... And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken."

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy

Jesus Loves Me

Second reading: Matthew 25: 34-40. In this section, Jesus tells a story about what it means to be part of the kingdom of God.

³⁴Then the King will say..., 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵Because I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' ³⁷Then the righteous will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?' ³⁹And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me.'"

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:

Softy and Tenderly

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

Interactive Homily: Let's talk a bit more about God's kingship and our lives of faith in light of Christ the King Sunday.

- As mentioned earlier, the Catholic church added this celebration in 1925, particularly in response to the plight of Mexican Christians, whose government insisted that that only the government was due ultimate allegiance. The Church in Mexico remained faithful, holding public parades throughout the land (with significant governmental pushback!) proclaiming "Christo Rey!" meaning "Christ is King!"²
- Typically, what are many kings (or governments) like in this world? How do they act?
 - Full authority over life and death; can be tyrannical, rich, powerful, feared, boastful, arrogant
- Who is a king typically surrounded by?
 - Other powerful and privileged people
- By contrast, let's look at how the Bible describes God as King.
 - What does Psalm 23 say about the Lord? "The Lord is my shepherd..."

² <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/christ-the-king-sunday-2017-preaching-notes>

- Also in Ezekiel 11: “As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them...”
- What does a shepherd do?
 - Cares for the vulnerable sheep: seeks the lost, cares for their wounds, leads them to safety and pasture, takes sides with the weak
- Let’s also look at the life of Jesus, who was called King of the Jews even at his death. Who did Jesus spend most of his time with? Who did Jesus care for?
 - The weak, marginalized, outcast, diseased, abandoned people.
 - Is that typically how we would think of a King?
 - No; in fact, it’s one of the reasons the rulers in charge hated Jesus, because Jesus spent time with the “wrong” people.
- God’s kingdom is completely upside-down to the kind of kingdoms we often see here on Earth! Instead of power, what is God’s kingdom based on?
 - Love, service, sacrifice, justice
- So, because we are subjects of this particular King, how should we act?
 - Matthew 25: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.... as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me.”
 - Humility, self-sacrifice, caring for the lowly and needy

... Let’s take a moment to silently pray and give thanks for our Servant King, and to consider how we might serve others.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord’s prayer together:

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. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Suggested Hymns:

**This is My Father's World
It is Well with My Soul
Standing on the Promises**

Third Reading: Quotes on Service

Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive. – Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama

Helping out is not some special skill. It is not the domain of rare individuals. It is not confined to a single part or time of our lives. We simply heed the call of that natural caring impulse and follow where it leads. –authors Ram Dass and Paul Gorman

Service is the rent each of us pays for living—the very purpose of life. –Marian Wright Edelman, American activist for children's rights

A man once stood before God, his heart breaking from the pain and injustice in the world. "Dear God," he cried out, "look at all the suffering, the anguish and distress in your world. Why don't you send help?" God responded, "I did send help. I sent you." – Rabbi David J. Wolpe

Suggested Hymns:

**Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing
Shall We Gather at the River**

Fourth Reading: Story from *A Tree Full of Angels*, by Macrina Wiederkehr, professor of comparative religions

[As I traveled in India,] one special moment of beauty stands out in my mind [that] I experienced in a bus station. ... I witnessed a little girl helping her brother get a drink at the water fountain. Attempting to lift her little brother to the proper height turned out to be impossible. I was just at the point of giving them some help when quick as lightning the little girl darted over to a shoeshine man, pointed to a footstool he wasn't using, dragged it to the water fountain, and very gently lifted up her thirsty brother. It all happened so fast and it was so simple, yet it turned out to be a moment of beauty that became a prayer for me. So much to be learned from such a little moment. Perhaps what touched me most

was her readiness to seek out a way to take care of the need without waiting to be rescued. It was a moment of beauty: a small child with a single heart.

Suggested Hymns:

Blest Be the Tie that Binds

I Need Thee Every Hour

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology (Reprise)