

whom he has called to follow him. As his followers, who accept his lordship, we are to follow his example and live lives of self-giving love. Jesus is an absolute King but he is also the Servant King. Jesus has exercised his kingship by putting aside his authority in the heavenly throne room as Co-Creator and eternal judge where he sat on the throne of glory, but instead shared in our human vulnerability by choosing to be born in a stable; it is his Servant Kingship that the Christmas story is really all about. Jesus' Kingship is a different kind of lordship to that of humanity, be they Kings, Queens or Presidents, it is a kingship of love, a love that is not about self-adoration, but self-giving. It is a kingship that is cross shaped. Kings and Queens have banners and their coats of arms, the US President has his Seal of Office, to proclaim their authority, but Jesus has a Cross as his banner; the mark of sacrificial love.

So what about us as his Church today; what does it mean for us, as those who accept Jesus as our Lord. It means that we are ambassadors for the King of Kings. We are to be messengers of his peace and love. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth he put it this way; *"He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us."* (2 Cor.20). But how do we live as Ambassadors for the King of Kings?

That is the point of Jesus' story that was our 2nd reading today about the Son of Man separating the sheep from the goats. It is a picture of the King of Kings at the end of time judging how well his church has performed as his ambassadors; and it all comes down to how well they have practically loved like Jesus: "Whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me!" And that was loving the hungry, the thirsty, keeping the vulnerable safe, clothing those in need, caring for the sick, visiting those in prison. That is a picture of people loving as Ambassadors of the King of Kings.

STODDEN NOVEMBER : "Live" and "ZOOM" services

During the National Lockdown month there will be no "live" services

29th Advent Sunday 10.30am ZOOM

6th December: 9.00am "live" Service @ Swineshead 10.30am ZOOM

HONEYCOMB: Honeycomb is now available as a virtual publication and the November issue is available through this link:

<https://fliphtml5.com/bookcase/ljoll>

ACCESS TO CHURCHES if anyone would like to enter one of the church buildings for prayer at the moment the best thing to ask them to contact me

DO MAKE USE OF OUR WEBSITE Our website is THE STODDEN CHURCHES. There you will find service information. It is somewhere you can suggest people look for information who are new to the area.

The Stodden Churches

Sunday 22nd November 2020 Christ the King

Our Vision Statement: As the Stodden Churches we seek to move forward together in love and service, sharing the good news of Christ with our neighbours

From the Stodden Villages please remember in your prayers : Teresa Allan, Pauline McManus, Steve Lemming, Ruth Krisans, Frances Bratcher, Andy Langley, Andrew Seabrook, Rosemary Morgan, Anne Hauxwell, , John Braga, Geoff Crow, Gordon James. *If someone would like a visit or a prayer tell Stephen the Rector (709740)*

VIRTUAL COLLECTION PLATE: If you wish to be able to give electronically here are the Stodden Churches bank detail: Stodden account number 10842168 sort code 20-74-81

This week's Psalm: 100

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.

Worship the LORD with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

Know that the LORD is God.

**It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.**

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him, bless his name.

For the LORD is good;

**his steadfast love endures for ever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.**

The First Reading: Ephesians 1:15-23: 15 I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, and for this reason 16I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. 17I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, 18so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know

what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, 19and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. 20God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. 22And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, 23which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

The Second Reading: Matthew 25:31-46: 31 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. 32All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 34Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." 37Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? 38And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" 40And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." 41Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; 42for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." 44Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" 45Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." 46And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'

Reflection for Christ the King: Today is known as the Sunday of Christ the King, when we reflect on Jesus' title as King of Kings. In addition Jesus is

Prince of Peace, Saviour, Emmanuel (God with us), Son of God, Son of Man, and of course Lord, and King of Kings. Jesus does not have as many titles as the Queen, however his titles have real meaning, and they will never cease or be passed on to successors because Jesus is risen from the dead and lives for ever as King of Kings. Jesus is not a constitutional monarch like the Queen. There is no democracy in the Kingdom of God: which means that if we give our loyalty to Jesus as our King we cannot vote him out as our Leader when we find his call on our lives inconvenient. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus, part of which we had as our first reading, he reflects on the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ whom they and he both serve. He wants those Christians at Ephesus to have a clear picture of their true king. Paul writes of how God the Father has made Jesus overlord of all by "raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come" (Eph.1:20-22). In the days of the New Testament, and for centuries before, the right hand place in the throne room was the place of highest honour and executive authority. Paul give a picture of Jesus that is one of a powerful, reigning King whose word is law, and who has the power to back up his word.

In the days when the Apostle Paul was writing his letter there was one obvious earthly comparison and one real challenge to Jesus' divine kingship: Caesar and the Roman Empire. Caesar ruled absolutely and claimed to be a God. Caesars often took divine titles, but their power could not match that of the eternal kingdom of God – eventually even their power and authority with their army of Legions crumbled away.

However that comparison with Caesar does link the titles "lord" and "king"; for in Greek "Lord" is "Kurios" and in New Testament times in the Roman Empire only one person and god could be called "Kurios" and it was Caesar. So when Christians called Jesus "Kurios", "Lord", they were proclaiming Jesus to be even greater than Caesar, and that their ultimate loyalty was to Jesus, King of Kings, and not Caesar. That was a risky thing to do for those early Christians: they faced persecution and death for saying "Jesus is Lord". So to give our loyalty to Jesus as King of Kings recognises Jesus' divine authority over our lives. However when we think of Jesus as King of Kings we should not think of an absolute dictatorship crushing all before it so that the King's will is done; Jesus is no "Man of Steel" Stalin.

Jesus' kingdom is different because at its core is the very nature of God, which is love: John puts it succinctly in his 1st letter: "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God lives in them" (1 John 4:16). Jesus' kingdom is about the outworking of the love of God the Father, in his Son, and in us,