

Getting a jump on the rest of the world



At this time of the year, Christians get a jump on the rest of the world. While the world at large marks the beginning of a new year on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, the Church is a whole month ahead of the game. The beginning of Advent, falling this year on 28 November, marks the Church's new year. Advent is a season of new beginnings, new resolve, and renewed expectations about what is to come.

In the Christian perspective what is to come is the kingdom, or reign or realm of God. It is a gloriously transformed future in which we trust, for which we pray and to which we commit ourselves, heart and soul and body.

St Paul wrote of the three great Christian virtues: faith, hope and love, which will endure eternally.

We aspire to love in our relationships with family and friends. Christian faith also nudges us to love our neighbours as our friends and pushes us to see all humanity as neighbours. Even more radically our faith asks us to love our enemies. Such love transforms the world in the direction of God's realm.

Imagining this future and giving ourselves to its coming is to exercise the gift of faith. Receiving in faith the realm God is ushering in is the means by which we receive all that God wishes to give us: life in its fullness.

Inseparable from the imaginative seeing that is faith and the transforming power of love is the profound hope we share. Often in our hearts and on our lips is the prayer "your kingdom come, your will be done, *on earth as in heaven*". We hope not only for eternity with God when our earthly lives are over, but for life now to be transformed by God's grace and love. We hope for a new and better world. This hope is at once spiritual, social and political.

Faith, hope and love propel us to challenge the way our societies are organised, to challenge the divisions that hinder the coming of God's reign and the doing of God's will.

Our Marks of Mission commit us:

- to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation; and
- to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

The Australian hymn writer, Elisabeth J Smith, expresses well the faith, hope and love that are the heart of Advent:

"God gives us a future, daring us to go
Into dreams and dangers on a path unknown
We will face tomorrow with the Spirit's power
We will let God change us for new life starts now.

We must leave behind us sins of yesterday
For God's new beginning is a better way

Fear and doubt and habit must not hold us back
God gives hope and insight and the strength we lack.

Holy Spirit teach us how to read the signs
How to meet the challenge of our troubled times
Love us into action stir us into prayer
Till we choose God's life and find our future there."

(Together in Song no.687)

As Advent breaks upon us, let's embrace new beginnings, strengthen our resolve to abide in God's reign and lift our expectations of what God's love and grace will work among us in this new year.

Yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Dr Phillip Aspinall AC
Archbishop of Brisbane

Sunday Devotions • Wednesday 17 November 2021 • By Melissa Conway

Sunday Devotion: 21 November 2021, Christ The King / Reign of Christ, Last Sunday after Pentecost

Christ be my leader



Main Readings: [2 Samuel 23.1-7](#) or [Daniel 7.9-10, 13-14](#); [Psalm 132.1-12 \(13-18\)](#) or [Psalm 93](#); [Revelation 1.4b-8](#); [John 8.33-37](#)

Supplementary Readings: [Psalm 93](#); [Philippians 2.1-11](#); [Daniel 7.9-10, 13-14](#); [Psalm 95.1-7](#); [John 12.20-33](#)

"To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." ([Revelation 1.5b-6](#))

In my former career, some of my management roles included occasionally representing 'the management' by making an announcement, opening an important meeting or giving a staff award. I would joke to others that my duties were largely ceremonial, but behind the scenes nothing could be further from the truth.

Today's reading portrays Jesus Christ as a ruler over all the kings of the earth. However, far from having a ceremonial role, Christ gives a model of leadership that is active, dynamic and powerful. A striking feature of Jesus as a leader is that he puts himself physically 'on the line' for the people he leads. He is "the first born of the dead" and the one who was pierced and bled for us.

When we sing 'Christ be my leader' it is this kind of leadership we are claiming for ourselves. Christ's leadership exemplifies self-giving and servanthood, which unite and empower others. By imitating Christ, we become a kingdom and priests, serving God through others. The extension is that, in following Christ's model, we are called to be Christ-like leaders in our own communities.

Christ's leadership demonstrates love and self-sacrifice that continue to inspire and challenge us.