



Celebrate

Christ the King
November 23, 2025

Jeremiah's promise of the execution of "justice and righteousness in the land" finds ironic fulfillment in the execution of Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. It appears utterly contradictory that a king should be crucified with a criminal. This victory appears for all the world as humiliating defeat. Yet through the gate of death Jesus opens the door to paradise.

Prayer of the Day

O God, our true life, to serve you is freedom, and to know you is unending joy. We worship you, we glorify you, we give thanks to you for your great glory. Abide with us, reign in us, and make this world into a fit habitation for your divine majesty, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading

Jeremiah 23:1-6

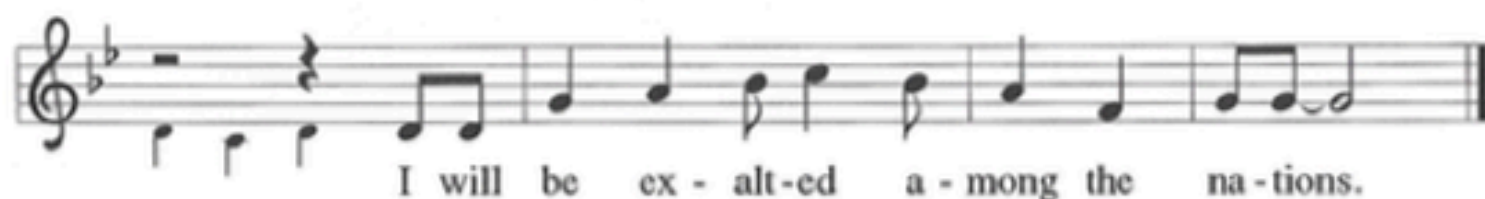
Today's reading builds on the common, ancient Near Eastern metaphor of the king as shepherd. Judah's unjust rulers have caused their people, their "flock," to be scattered. Nevertheless, God will raise up a new and righteous shepherd who will rule a restored Judah.

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD. ²Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the LORD. ³Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply.

⁴I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the LORD.

⁵The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

Psalm 46; refrain, Ps. 46:10



God is our ref-¹uge and strength,
a very present¹ help in trouble.

²Therefore we will not fear, though the ¹earth be moved,
and though the mountains shake in the depths ¹of the sea:

³though its waters ¹rage and foam,
and though the mountains tremble ¹with its tumult.

⁴There is a river whose streams make glad the cit-¹y of God,
the holy habitation of¹ the Most High.

⁵God is in the midst of the city; it shall ¹not be shaken;
God shall help it at the ¹break of day.

⁶The nations rage, and the ¹kingdoms shake;
God speaks, and the earth ¹melts away. **R**

⁷The LORD of ¹hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob ¹is our stronghold.

⁸Come now, regard the works ¹ of the LORD,
what desolations God has brought up- ¹ on the earth:

⁹behold the one who makes war to cease in ¹all the world;
who breaks the bow, and shatters the spear,
and burns the ¹shields with fire.

¹⁰⁴“Be still, then, and know that ¹I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations;
I will be exalted ¹in the earth.”

¹¹The LORD of ¹hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob ¹is our stronghold. **R**

An early Christian hymn praises the mystery of the political, personal, and mystical Christ, the one who was present at creation and is eternally reigning with God.

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible

and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Gospel

Luke 23:33-43

Amid scoffing and slander from those who sarcastically call him Messiah and King, Jesus reveals that to be Messiah and King is to give one's life for others. Here he uses his power to welcome a despised criminal to paradise but puts his own death into God's hands.

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing. ³⁵And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" ³⁶The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, ³⁷and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" ³⁸There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

³⁹One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" ⁴⁰But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?" ⁴¹And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴²Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Gathered with one voice, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

We pray for the church in the world, its leaders, and its mission to share the good news of healing and restoration. Inspire us to embody the beloved community in ways that faithfully witness to the Holy Spirit. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We pray for the trembling mountains and glad streams of creation. Preserve and renew your coastlines, deep seas, forests, and grasslands. Guide all who tend flocks or care for creatures of all kinds. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We pray for leaders and advocates in government, civic life, and public safety. Support equity across the globe, and heal division with accountability and truth. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We pray for any who are hungry, living in poverty or desperation, weary in body or spirit, or sick (*especially*). Comfort all in need of your tender care. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We pray for this part of the body of Christ gathered around word and sacrament. Bring us into authentic community where all ages are valued and experience God's faithfulness together. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give thanks for all who have died in faith (*especially*). May we remember them faithfully until we are gathered with you in the paradise you promise. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We offer these and all our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your grace and unyielding love; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (commemoration of Justus Falckner, 1723; Jehu Jones, 1852; William Passavant, 1894; pastors in North America) Psalm 24. **Tuesday** (commemoration of Isaac Watts, hymnwriter, 1748) Revelation 22:8-21. **Wednesday** Isaiah 60:8-16. **Thursday** (Day of Thanksgiving [USA]) Psalm 122. **Friday** Hebrews 11:1-7. **Saturday** Genesis 6:11-22. **First Sunday of Advent** Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44.

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