

BASINGSTOKE AND READING CIRCUIT SERVICE

Aim: To show that the Kingdom of God arrived in Jesus Christ, Son of God

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to this service of worship, wherever you are. This is the first of five Sundays in our Bible Month series. Today we are thinking a little bit about 'God's Reign and Jesus' preaching about God's kingdom coming. Our prayers are drawn mainly from Mark 1:1-3:6 and the Bible Version used is the Contemporary English Version. As we worship God our King through Jesus Christ, Son of God, may we know afresh God's reign and rule in our hearts.

CALL TO WORSHIP:

Here these words from Psalms 93:1-2

Our Lord, you are King! Majesty and power are your royal robes.
You put the world in place, and it will never be moved.
You have always ruled, and you are eternal. **Amen**

Our first hymn is a prayer to God asking God to bring in the fullness of His reign in the world, and to prepare our longing hearts, as we yearn and look for the fullness of the Kingdom of God.

<https://youtu.be/Oe-Vy5LkYEs>

FIRST HYMN: H&P 783- Thy Kingdom come, O God

Thy kingdom come, O God,
Thy rule, O Christ, begin;
Break with thine iron rod
the tyrannies of sin.

Where is thy reign of peace,
And purity and love?
When shall all hatred cease,
As in the realms above?

When comes the promised time
That war shall be no more—
oppression, lust, and crime
Shall flee thy face before?

We pray thee, Lord, arise,
And come in thy great might;
Revive our longing eyes,
Which languish for thy sight.

Men scorn thy sacred Name,
And wolves devour thy fold;
By many deeds of shame
We learn that love grows cold.

O'er lands both near and far
Thick darkness broodeth yet:
Arise, O morning star,
Arise, and never set!

Lewis Hensley (1824-1905) alt

APPROACH *and* ADORATION — CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION:

Let us pray:

God, who reigns and rules,
The Good news about Jesus Christ, your Son
began as it was written by your prophet Isaiah.
Your servant John told everyone
"To turn back to God and be baptized
and their sins will be forgiven."
Then, they will be ready to meet the *One* whom God is sending;
one who is more powerful and outstanding,
who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

God, who calls us to repentance,
and has given us a share in your salvation,
we adore you and praise you
for all your gracious acts of loving-kindness
in Jesus Christ, your Son.
Give us receptive ears and hearts to receive anew
the personal testimony of your servant Peter
as recorded by his friend John Mark.

God of our Salvation,
often times we find ourselves in the desert places of our lives,
tested by Satan, surrounded by many dangers and snares.
In the quietness of our hearts,
we offer to you our moments of weakness.....,
and we ask you God, our Protector, to take care of us,
and to help us to be your Good news in the world.

Silence

God of glad tidings,
we hear and we receive your Good news
“that our sins are forgiven” through Jesus Christ, Son of God.
We wait for the day, when the kingdom of this world
would become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ,
when He shall reign for ever and ever!” **Amen**

Based on Mark 1:1-12 & Revelation 11:15

PETER’S MOTHER-IN-LAW HEALS: — *read by Hilary Reed- trainee worship leader, Trinity*
The story retold: Mark 1:29-31



‘We are back!’ called Simon Peter, arriving home from the synagogue service with his brother Andrew. ‘I have brought a visitor to dinner.’ Mum could not believe her ears. A visitor, when everything was upside down! She had not been able to go to the synagogue because Gran was so ill. Dinner was nowhere near ready. But before she could say a word they had all trooped into the little living room. Then she saw who the visitor was. It was their new friend Jesus. That was different. She began to tell him about her worry at once. ‘Please come and see Gran,’ they asked Jesus. Mum led the way to the little bed in the corner where Gran lay tossing. Her forehead was hot and her lips dry. She looked very ill. Jesus sat down gently beside her. He took her hand in his and helped her to sit up. At once her fever went. She felt quite better. She gave a big smile and jumped to her feet. Jesus had made her well. ‘It is time dinner was ready,’ she said, and hurried to set the table and bring in the food. Then she made Jesus sit down and brought him a bowl of water, to wash his hands. In no time they were enjoying their dinner, eating and laughing together. They talked about the wonderful things that Jesus had said and done in the synagogue that morning. They were all very happy, and Gran was the happiest of them all.

*The Lion Book of Bible Stories and Prayers (1980) —
Retold by Mary Batchelor (slightly adapted)*

OLD TESTAMENT READING:

Isaiah 52:7-10 – (CEV) — A Message of Hope for Jerusalem

7 What a beautiful sight! On the mountains a messenger announces to Jerusalem, “Good news! You are saved. There will be peace. Your God is now King.” 8 Everyone on guard duty, sing and celebrate! Look! You can see the Lord returning to Zion. 9 Jerusalem, rise from the ruins! Join in the singing. The Lord has given comfort to his people; he comes to your rescue. 10 The Lord has shown all nations his mighty strength; now everyone will see the saving power of our God.

SECOND HYMN: StF 418 / H&P 465 – We have a Gospel to proclaim

Our second hymn reminds us of God’s redeeming story in Jesus Christ, Son of God, in whom we rejoice to name him as our King:

<https://youtu.be/E-SPYAgCtkw>

We have a gospel to proclaim

Good news for all throughout the earth;

the gospel of a Saviour’s name:

We sing his glory, tell His worth.

Tell of his birth at Bethlehem —
not in a royal house or hall,
but in a stable dark and dim,
the Word made flesh, a light for all.

Tell of his death at Calvary:
hated by those he came to save,
in lonely suffering on the cross,
for all he loved, his life he gave.

Tell of that glorious Easter morn:
empty the tomb, for He was free.
He broke the power of death and hell
that we might share his victory.

Tell of his reign at God’s right hand,
by all creation glorified.
He sends His Spirit on his Church
to live for him, the Lamb who died.

Now we rejoice to name him King:
Jesus is Lord of all the earth.
This gospel message we proclaim:
We sing his glory, tell His worth.

Edward J. Burns (1938)

GOSPEL READING:

Mark 1:14-28 (CEV)

¹⁴After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee and told the Good news that comes from God. ¹⁵He said, “The time has come! God’s kingdom will soon be here. Turn back to God and believe the Good news!”

¹⁶As Jesus was walking along the shore of Lake Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew. They were fishermen and were casting their nets into the lake. ¹⁷Jesus said to them, “Come with me! I will teach you how to bring in people instead of fish.” ¹⁸Right then the two brothers dropped their nets and went with him.

¹⁹Jesus walked on and soon saw James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were in a boat, mending their nets. ²⁰At once Jesus asked them to come with him. They left their father in the boat with the hired workers and went with him.

²¹Jesus and his disciples went to the town of Capernaum. Then on the next Sabbath he went into the Jewish meeting place and started teaching. ²²Everyone was amazed at his teaching. He taught with authority, and not like the teachers of the Law of Moses.

²³ Suddenly a man with an evil spirit in him entered the meeting place and yelled, ²⁴ “Jesus from Nazareth, what do you want with us? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are! You are God’s Holy One.”

²⁵ Jesus told the evil spirit, “Be quiet and come out of the man!” ²⁶ The spirit shook him. Then it gave a loud shout and left.

²⁷ Everyone was completely surprised and kept saying to each other, “What is this? It must be some new kind of powerful teaching! Even the evil spirits obey him.” ²⁸ News about Jesus quickly spread all over Galilee.

LET US PRAY:

God, who gives comfort to your people,
may we hear afresh the Good news, that we are saved.
That there will be peace, for our God is King!
Make known to all your saving power
in Jesus Christ, our Saviour and King. **Amen**

Based on Isaiah 52:7-10

SERMON: *Preaching God’s reign: Jesus begins to proclaim that the Kingdom of God is here*

Mark opens his gospel with these words, “This is the Good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

Mark wrote his gospel to the Christians in Rome, “where the birthday of the Roman emperor Augustus Caesar was celebrated throughout the Empire as “good news” and, with much celebration he was declared the “Son of God”. These two phrases “**good news and Son of God**” were common knowledge among Roman subjects, and Mark begins his gospel by linking these two phrases to the OT and to Jesus Christ (*Mk 1:1-3*).

Throughout the OT, the people anticipated a time when the Messiah would come and God’s reign on earth would be known. This expectation was still heightened during the time of Jesus. The Jewish people were looking for the Messiah who would usher in God’s Kingdom and deliver them from Roman oppression.

When Jesus began preaching, he declared that the KOG was near and told the people to repent and believe (*Mark 1:14-15*). This is not so different to what John the Baptist was preaching. John told the people that the KOG was imminent (soon to happen), and that God was about to visit his people. John’s message was interpreted to mean that their long awaited deliverance was shortly to come and therefore Roman occupation would quickly end. But John’s concept of God’s visitation meant that the time had come when Israel must repent in order to receive the soon coming KOG.

Neither John nor Jesus defined what is meant by the KOG — the people were left to work this out for themselves — and so they continued with their expectation of political salvation. This political idea of the KOG was also among the disciples and was expressed when the two brothers, James and John asked for the two prominent places in Jesus’ kingdom. Jesus promptly rebuked the brothers, but he did not deny or affirm this political idea of the KOG.

In (*Luke 17:20-21*) Jesus told the Pharisees that the KOG would not come the way they expect, because it’s within you — inferring, that the elements that make up the KOG are more than political/religious power and space. The KOG Jesus spoke of was previously absent but had arrived (in Jesus) and must be received internally (like a little child) in order to be included within its community (*Mark 10:14-15*). So, when Jesus spoke of the present KOG; it appeared as though he meant the kingship of God rather than God’s territorial rule.

Early in Mark, Jesus received the Father’s approval at his baptism. He was tested by the devil and chose the way of obedience. He started selecting disciples — now, he must begin his mission. Mark quickly establishes Jesus’ identity and was very keen to show what the KOG looks like through Jesus Christ, Son of God. Immediately, the people recognised a unique authority as Jesus began to demonstrate the presence of God’s kingdom and evil spirits obeyed Him. The people were amazed — this was a new kind of teaching and authority — *he commands even evil spirits and they obey him*. Surely only God can do that! (*Mark 1:27-28*).

Biblical interpreters, have identified an essential difference between John and Jesus' preaching of the KOG. Jesus did not just proclaim the nearness of a heavenly visitation — rather; Jesus asserted that divinity is already here among humanity — suggesting that God's promised reign is already in fulfilment.

Mark wants his readers to know that the KOG is first and foremost about God, and what God is doing in and through his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus demonstrated that the KOG includes God's reign of justice breaking-into the world, in ways that liberate the oppressed and the marginalized, and restoring human dignity and value.

Mark wants his audience to see that Jesus' arrival brought the KOG within touching distance of ordinary people. Mark focuses on Jesus' healings and miracles, which pointed the people back to the power and authority of God in Jesus Christ — who brings a newness that cannot be contained within the old form of religion {Law} (*Mark 2:21-22*).

The KOG Jesus proclaimed concerns the deeper matters of the human heart. Jesus' acts of compassion and mercy tangibly reconnected and pointed the recipients back to God. The Body of Christ have a far greater calling than philanthropy — we are called to actively live-out the values and principles of *the KOG* in ways that points the world back to God.

So, the KOG became a present reality in Jesus, but it is still yet to come in its fullness. *Matthew 13*, implies, that one day God would intervene in the world in a way that transforms the social-political structures. Paul (*1 Cor 15:24-28*) and John the Apostle (*Rev 11:15*) tells of the arrival of the fullness of God's kingdom at the end of the world. And, consequently, we live in this tension of the "now – the present KOG" and the "not yet – the future KOG" — ...until the kingdom of the world become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

This radical message — challenged the claims of the imperial authorities of Rome. Caesar's claim to special authority was challenged by the absolute authority of Christ, — just as all mortal rulers are! Mark intentionally introduces his readers very early-on to Jesus Christ, — who is "Good" news to the world, and the Son of God; through whom and in whom the fullness of God's reign would be established. Thanks be to God! Amen

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIVES AND GIFTS TO GOD:

Self-giving God, you came to us and redeemed us in Jesus Christ, your Son; accept we pray our gifts of money, all our work of compassion and mercy, and the offering of our lives, as a sweet sacrifice of praise unto your name, through your Son Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our King. Amen

THIRD HYMN: StF 335 / H&P 243 – Rejoice, the Lord is King!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2N0iVysrykU> or <https://youtu.be/AhEUCSzaU8M>

Our third hymn invites us to rejoice in the kingship of our risen and exalted Lord, who sits at God's right hand till all his foes submit and he shall reign forever and ever.

Rejoice the Lord is King!

Your Lord and King adore!
mortals, give thanks and sing,
and triumph evermore.

*Lift up your heart! lift up your voice;
rejoice! Again I say: rejoice!*

Jesus, the Saviour reigns,
the God of truth and love:
when he had purged our stains,
he took his seat above.

His kingdom cannot fail;
he rules o'er earth and heaven;
the keys of death and hell,
are to our Jesus given:

He sits at God's right hand
till all his foes submit,
and bow to his command,
and fall beneath his feet:

Rejoice in glorious hope,
Jesus the Judge shall come,
and take his servants up
to their eternal home:
*We soon shall hear the archangel's
voice;
God trumpet-call shall sound: Rejoice!*

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

PRAYERS OF THANKS AND INTERCESSION:

Let us offer our prayers to God, together with all God's people, through Jesus Christ, Son of God, who revealed to us the inner workings and values of God's Kingdom:

We give thanks for the light that was revealed to us in the face of Jesus Christ — who called us to his mission, like he called the first disciples; and who is the head, the authority of his Body, the Church. Give your Church the courage to leave behind all the things which hinder us from following you completely. Enlighten our vision with the light of your gospel and enable us to share your eternal hope with others in the world: *Mark 1:16-20*

Lord, your kingdom come.
On earth, as it is in heaven.

We give thanks for our Lord Jesus Christ, who taught with authority and pointed us to the Father — who demonstrated his authority over the kingdom of darkness and the kingdoms of this world. We pray for the nations of the world and all who govern and lead them, that they would lead and govern with justice and good will toward all peoples. Lord, direct all who are seeking to improve the world and to make it a better place. We pray for those living on the margins of society, that they may be touched by the hope, values and the Good news that God's Kingdom bring in His Son: *Mark 1:21-28*

Lord, your kingdom come.
On earth, as it is in heaven.

We give thanks for Jesus' demonstration of power over sickness, disease and physical irregularity — who cared enough to stop, to interrupt his schedule to touch sick people and restore them to health and wholeness. We pray for all who are sick in body, soul or spirit, that they would know the touch of God's healing hands in Jesus Christ. We pray for those who are marginalised because of their illness, that they may know the restoration and dignity God's kingdom offers: *Mark 1:29-2:12; 3:1-6*

Lord, your kingdom come.
On earth, as it is in heaven.

We give thanks for Jesus' authority and victory over sin — who took the time to eat with sinners and with those whose reputations were questionable in society. Lord, Jesus Christ, thank you that you did not come to invite good people to follow you but to call ordinary people like us.

We pray for those who are struggling with their calling and vocation, those whose lives lack meaning and purpose and those who need a fresh start in life. May the joys and celebration of God's kingdom become a reality for them here on earth: *Mark 2:13-17*

Lord, your kingdom come.
On earth, as it is in heaven.

We give thanks for Jesus' authority over the law, rituals and forms, and for bringing a newness that cannot be contained within the old form of religion, the Law.

Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath, shed your light anew on us and give us a right attitude toward our worship of you, our learning and caring, our service and mission and our evangelising. Lord, may your compassion and mercy transform our attitudes, and enfold us all in the fullness of your kingdom: *Mark 2:23-27*

We give thanks for Jesus' victory and authority over death. We remember and give thanks to God for those who have died, and we commend to God's loving care those nearing the time of death. Lord, Jesus, may you welcome them into the eternal peace of your Father's kingdom: *Mark 5:35-43*

Merciful Father, accept our prayers spoken and unspoken, through Jesus Christ your Son, our Saviour and King:

Let us share together in saying **THE LORD'S PRAYER:**

FOURTH HYMN: StF404 – God's Spirit is in my heart

Our closing hymn sends us out to be participants in the Mission of God in the world, in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of God.

<https://youtu.be/9VTQvYG-bl4>

God's spirit is in my heart ;
he has called me and set me apart.
This is what I have to do,
what I have to do :

*He sent me to give the good news to
the poor,
tell prisoners that they are prisoners
no more,
tell blind people that they can see,
and set the down-trodden free,
and go tell everyone
the news that the kingdom of God has
come;
and go tell everyone
the news that God's kingdom has
come.*

Just as the Father sent me,
so I'm sending you out to be
my witness throughout the world —
the whole of the world :

Don't carry a load in your pack ;
you don't need two shirts on your back ;
God's workers can earn their own keep —
can earn their own keep :

Don't worry what you have to say ;
don't worry, because on that day
God's spirit will speak in your heart —
will speak in your heart :

*v. 1 and refrain Alan T. Dale (1902–1979)
vv. 2-4 Hubert Richards (b. 1921)*

THE BLESSING:

The love of God the Father enfold us,
the wisdom of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, enlighten us,
the fire of the Holy Spirit enflame us;
and the blessing of God, the Three in One,
be upon us and abide with us now and forever. **Amen**

MWB.pg 38, (slightly adapted)

SENDING OUT:

We go into the world
to walk in God's light,
to rejoice in God's love
and to reflect God's glory. **Amen**

MWB.pg 50