

# Christ the King

[Home](#) [Up](#)

## Prayer of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things to your beloved Son, whom you anointed priest forever and king of all creation: Grant that all the people of the earth now divided by the power of sin, may be united under the glorious and gentle rule of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## Jeremiah 23:1-6

{1} Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD. {2} Therefore 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. {3} Then 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. {4} I 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. {5} The 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. {6} In 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."

1. *the shepherds*: "Judah's rulers—but perhaps here (plural) including both the king (Zedekiah?) and the nobles who dominated him." [1]

2. *you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you*: "A play on the verb *pqd* which on its first occurrence has the force of 'look after, care for,' and on the second that of 'call to account, punish.'" [2]

4. *nor shall any be missing*: "The play on *pqd* continues. The sheep are "looked after," therefore 'mustered,' 'counted,' therefore not 'missing.'" [3]

5. *David*: the Davidic dynasty.

*a righteous branch*: Not a false pretender to the throne.

6. *"The Lord is our righteousness"*: The Hebrew for this phrase is similar to the name "Zedekiah." Some believed that Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle, would save Judah from the Babylonians. But Zedekiah had little authority and less power though he reigned from 597 to 587 bc. The reference in this passage, written after the deportation, is ironic. Yahweh's judgment on Zedekiah, pronounced by Jeremiah, is recorded in Jeremiah 21.

"The prophecy has to do with the ideal king (Messiah) of the Davidic line under whose just and victorious rule all the dynastic hopes would be realized.... The term 'Shoot' (*semah*), in most EVV 'Branch,' later became a technical term for this expected king (Zech. iii 8; vi 12).... The similarity of the future Davidide's name to that of Zedekiah...is scarcely coincidental." [4]

## Psalms 46

{1} God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. {2} Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; {3} though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Selah {4} There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. {5} God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns. {6} The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. {7} The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah {8} Come, behold the works of the LORD; see what

desolations he has brought on the earth. {9} He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. {10} "Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth." {11} The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

Psalm 46 is the basis for Martin Luther's hymn *Ein Feste Burg*, "A Mighty Fortress," written around 1528. "He did not write it to express his own feelings, but to interpret and apply the 46<sup>th</sup> Psalm to the church of his own time and its struggles." [5]

The Psalm describes the presence and constancy of God in the midst of danger and uncertainty. The refrain in verses 7 and 11 (and probably also in verse 3) [6] points to the fact "that the helpful presence of Yahweh forms that fortress which is untouchable and invincible even in the great catastrophes of nature and history.... Here the community will be able to learn that not 'the church' is the indestructible fortress on earth but only the church in which God himself is present. And through this presence of God and rule of God a new understanding of life in the world of nations and of wars will be opened up." [7]

### **Colossians 1:11-20**

{11} 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 {12} giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. {13} He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, {14} in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. {15} He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; {16} for 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. {17} He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. {18} He 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. {19} For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, {20} and 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.

12-14: Ernst Käsemann, and George E. Cannon describe these verses as a baptismal confession, possibly of traditional origin that has become attached to the Christ-hymn in verses 15-20. [8]

"...Colossians 1:15-20 embodies an early Christian tribute, set in hymnic form, to the Church's Lord, which the writer borrows from the liturgical praxis which was familiar both to himself [Paul] and to his readers." [9]

15-16: The verses recall the creation narrative in Genesis: the image of God, all things in heaven and earth. "He" is the Lord (verse 10) Jesus. Not only are all things created *in* him, they are created *for* him. "The ruler of the cosmos is, was, and always will be none other than Jesus Christ. This outrageous claim is only possible within Paul's framework of the full and concurrent humanity and divinity of Christ Jesus. If we would only have the eyes and ears of faith, then we can experience the work and person of *this* Christ: cosmic and crucified, God and human, master of the universe and intimate friend." [10]

17-20: The Lord is before everything ("Before Abraham was, I am," John 5:58); he is the firstborn of the dead (also the firstborn of all creation, verse 15); he is the head of the body, the church (1 Corinthians 12); God's fullness dwells in him: *pleroma* "is the fullness of God (in the active sense), filling Jesus, and is thus the depiction of the presence of God in his Son and thereby in the world." [11]

### **Luke 23:33-43**

{33} 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. {34} Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing. {35} And 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!" {36} The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, {37} and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" {38} There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews." {39} One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" {40} But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?" {41} And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." {42} Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." {43} He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

33. *criminals*: Mark and Matthew use the Greek word *lestai*, "peasants who have been repressed and separated from their land and village. This is usually the result if they have been excessively taxed and forced to sell their land, have had their land confiscated by elites, or have broken an law enforced by the elites." [12] Barabbas was a *lestes* (Luke 23:18-19). Jesus had been accused of political crimes (Luke 23:2; 38, 39). In Luke the Greek is *kakourgo*, literally, "malefactor;" a common thief. This is Luke's way of dismissing the earthly, political issues. Jesus' crucifixion between two criminals is seen as a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12 (Luke 22:37).

34. *"Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing"*: "to whom do they refer? Scarcely to the Roman soldiers. Apart from the fact that the soldiers have not yet men mentioned (see v. 36), the 'ignorance motif' of Acts would have to be invoked to explain the sense of 'them,' i.e. the Jewish 'leaders' of the context, those who were crucifying and mocking him" [13] (Acts 2:36).

*they cast lots to divide his clothing*: An allusion to Psalm 22:18.

35. See Psalm 22:8.

*He saved others, let him save himself*: This is an acknowledgement that Jesus had saved others. The reading concludes with Jesus' statement to one of the criminals in verse 43, "today you will be with me in paradise," indicating that both he and the criminal will be "saved," not from the cross but from separation from God.

*the Messiah of God, his chosen one*: In Luke 9:35 "chosen one" is coupled with "my son" in the Transfiguration narrative. Jesus is God's chosen one, the one anointed by God (at baptism, and now with the baptism of death (Mark 10:38; Romans 6:3).

36. *The soldiers also mocked him*: They continued their ill-treatment of Jesus which began in 22:63-65, now with the added tone of ridicule.

37: "Satan had offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world (4:5-7). The soldiers challenge Jesus to demonstrate his kingship by saving himself.... For Luke this is of course a high point in his narrative. Jesus *is* the King of the Jews. His only crime was to be what he truly is, and the cross is the place of his enthronement, for greatness is won through renunciation of self." [14]

38. *This is the King of the Jews*: Literally, King of the Judeans. Jesus' answer to Pilate's question, "Are you the king of the Judeans," an affirmation of the assertion, though it leaves Pilate with the determination of how to understand it. Luke adds the demonstrative pronoun, "this" to the title to indicate the Roman taunt directed against both Jesus and any other royal pretenders. Other Judean kings would be treated as this one had been treated.

39. *One of the criminals*: In Mark 15:32 and Matthew 27:44 both robbers revile Jesus. In Luke only one criminal attacks Jesus, the other rebukes the first.

43. *paradise*: This is a Persian loan-word meaning a garden or park. It took on the connotation of the paradisaical garden of Eden (Revelation 2:7). It is used as a synonym for heaven in 2 Corinthians 12:3-4.

## Reflection

In Year A the emphasis on this Sunday is on Jesus' identification of himself with the oppressed and the helpless. In Year B, it is on Pilate's question, "Are you the King of the Judeans."

This year the first lesson recalls Yahweh's intent to "raise up a righteous Branch for David" who will "execute justice and righteousness in the land." The Psalm celebrates God as the refuge and strength of his people. The second lesson tells us that God "has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son." In the Gospel the nature of Jesus' kingship as one which saves others at the expenses of his own life is emphasized.

Christ is King, not an earthly king, but a king to reconcile us with God, and make our peace with him and with each other through the blood of his cross.

## Hymns [15]

*With One Voice* (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

323 --E--O Lord of Light,  
537 --D--O Jesus, King  
370 --P--Blessed Be the  
725v --P--Blessed Be the  
42 --II--Of the Father's

526 --II--Immortal, Invisible, God  
301 --G--Come to Calvary's  
740v--G--Jesus, Remember  
(740s) 102, 328, 298, 631v, 744v,  
801v/771s

## Prayers of the People [16]

P or A: In jubilation, we declare today that Christ is King of all--ruling with love and mercy. In our prayers we say "Christ, our compassionate King" and respond, "Hear our prayer."

A: We pray for the bishops and pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, that they might lead inspired by the love of Christ, cooperate with those to whom they minister, and make decisions with wisdom and fairness. Christ, our compassionate King. Hear...

A: We pray for those who lead this nation, that they might be guided by a vision of justice--forming policies which give life and dignity to all people, and ensuring that Canada is a safe and welcoming place for those within and without its borders. Christ, our compassionate King. Hear...

A: Faithful God, you remember the covenant made with your people. You raised up a Saviour from the house of David, that your people might be forgiven their iniquities and find eternal life. Grant us grace to trust in your faithfulness and to do your will. Christ, our compassionate King. Hear...

A: That we may emulate our King who lived as a servant, whose wealth was his faith in God and his love for humankind, and whose power was gained in surrendering all on the cross. Christ, our compassionate King. Hear...

A: That all who are sick and dying might find comfort at the feet of Jesus--that their pain and suffering might be removed. We think especially of \_\_\_\_\_, and those whom we name in our hearts... Christ, our compassionate King. Hear...

P: Jesus, remember us as you come into your Kingdom. We entrust our prayers to you, praying in your name, the name of our living King, Amen.

Or [17]

*Presider or deacon*

Let us pray to our God through Jesus Christ, king of the Jews and messiah who saves all peoples.

*Deacon or other leader*

For *N* our bishop and *N* our presbyter, for this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

For the leaders of the nations and all in authority, and for mercy, justice, and peace among all peoples.

For good weather, abundant fruits of the earth, and peaceful times.

For our city and those who live in it, and for our families, companions, and all those we love.

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering, prisoners, captives, and their families, the hungry, homeless, and oppressed.

For those who rest in Christ and for all the dead.

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.

Lifting our voices with all creation, with the blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

*Presider*

God of the ages, who reconciles all things to yourself in Christ, hear the prayers we offer this day and remember us in your kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Notes

The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

[1] John Bright, *Jeremiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., p. 143.

[2] *Loc. cit.*

[3] *Loc. cit.*

[4] *Loc. cit.*

[5] George MacDonald, "The Hymns," *Luther's Works* (edited by Ulrich S. Leupold). Vol. 53, *Liturgy and Hymns*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965. P. 283.

[6] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988, p. 459.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 464.

[8] Ernst Käsemann, "A Primitive Christian Baptismal Liturgy, *Essays on New Testament Themes*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964, pp. 149-168; George E. Cannon, *The Use of Traditional Materials in Colossians*. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983, pp. 12-37.

[9] Ralph P. Martin, "An Early Christian Hymn (Col. 1:15-20)," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 36(1964)199-200.

[10] Thomas R. Gildemeister, "Christology and the Focus of Faith: Readings from Paul's Letter to the Colossians in Year C," *Quarterly Review*, Spring 1998, p. 100.

[11] Marcus Barth and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday, 1994, 212.

[12] K. C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998, p. 87.

[13] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (x-xxiv): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1985, pp. 1503-1504.

[14] Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age: A Commentary on St. Luke's Gospel*

(Revised and Expanded). Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988, p. 376.

[15] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rclc0001.txt>

[16] [http://www.worship.on.ca/text/inter\\_c.txt](http://www.worship.on.ca/text/inter_c.txt)

[17] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>