

# Church of St Lawrence, Mereworth

22 November, 2020



## Collects for today

### **The Collect for the last Sunday before Advent**

Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people;  
that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works,  
may of thee be plenteously rewarded;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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### **The Collect for Christ the King**

Eternal Father,  
whose Son Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven  
that he might rule over all things as Lord and King:  
keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit  
and in the bond of peace,  
and bring the whole created order to worship at his feet;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

### **Psalms 95 verses 1 - 7**

O come, let us sing to the Lord;  
let us heartily rejoice in the rock of our salvation.  
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving  
and be glad in him with psalms.  
For the Lord is a great God  
and a great king above all gods.  
In his hand are the depths of the earth  
and the heights of the mountains are his also.  
The sea is his, for he made it,

and his hands have moulded the dry land.  
Come, let us worship and bow down  
and kneel before the Lord our Maker.  
For he is our God; we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.  
Glory to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

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### **Ephesians chapter 1, verses 15 – 23**

<sup>15</sup> I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, and for this reason <sup>16</sup> I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup> I 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, <sup>18</sup> so 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, <sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. <sup>20</sup> God 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, <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

### **Matthew's Gospel chapter 25, verses 31 – 46**

<sup>31</sup> '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. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, <sup>33</sup> and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. <sup>34</sup> Then 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; <sup>35</sup> for 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, <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." <sup>37</sup> Then 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? <sup>38</sup> And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? <sup>39</sup> And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" <sup>40</sup> And 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, <sup>41</sup> you did it to me." <sup>41</sup> Then 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; <sup>42</sup> for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I 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." <sup>44</sup> Then 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?" <sup>45</sup> Then 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.”<sup>46</sup> And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’

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### **Short Reflection**

Today has two well-known names. It has been traditionally known as ‘Stir up Sunday’ because the Collect for the day, according to the Book of Common Prayer, includes these words: ‘Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people.’ For many, many years, these words have been used in a secular context to refer to the ‘stirring up’ of the ingredients for the Christmas pudding. Christmas puddings were traditionally prepared on this day to give them time to mature before being enjoyed on Christmas Day.

Useful though this reminder has been over the years, these words were actually written to urge Christians to stir up their lives, and pledge themselves anew to doing God’s work.

The second name for this Sunday is the feast of Christ the King. This is a much more recent name. In 1925 Pope Pius XI instituted this feast. It was a reminder to Christians that Christ was their king, and that their fundamental alliance was to Him. Any allegiance to an earthly ruler was secondary. The 1920s and 1930s saw a rise in dictatorship and oppression across Europe, including the rise of fascism in Italy. By instituting this feast, Pius hoped to stir up people’s consciences and lives. He wanted them to focus on obeying Christ’s commandment to love God and their neighbours, even if it meant disobeying the unjust edicts of earthly rulers.

Putting God’s will first in Pope Pius’ time led, in many cases, to tremendous sacrifice. However, as today’s gospel reading reminds us, it is those who put God and other people first who will be recognised as Christ’s own, and rightful inheritors of God’s kingdom.

Betty Earl