

Breaking Open Scripture Study

The Reign of Christ

From Hope to Grace

November 23rd 2025



**BREAKING
OPEN**

Scripture Study

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A weekly reflection based on the preaching at St Peter's by the Lake, Paynesville, together with a study guide based on the readings, some liturgical resources RCL Lectionary, and a weekly devotion

INTRODUCTION

Revised Common Lectionary Related

The Last Sunday after Pentecost

The Reign of Christ

Jeremiah 23.1-6

Psalms 46

Colossians 1.11-20

Luke 23.33-43



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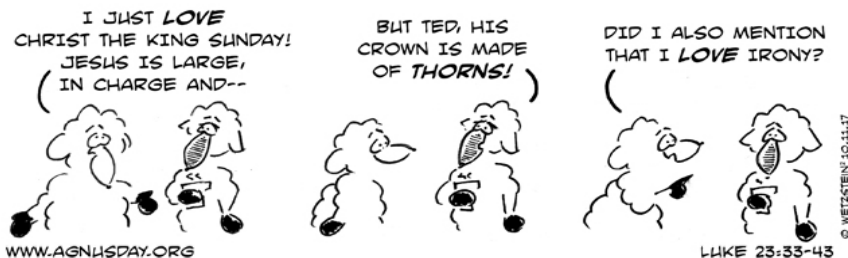
Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collects

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.



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In a world that often feels like it's falling apart, we encounter a pivotal moment born in the most horrific circumstances, yet transitioning from hope to grace at the threshold of a new Church Year. Through the lens of four biblical passages, there is a tapestry of divine promise and presence, beginning with Jeremiah's vision of a righteous shepherd who gathers the scattered flock, and Zechariah's prophecy of dawn breaking upon a darkened world.

The message takes flight as we explore Paul's cosmic vision of Christ holding all things together, before landing at the foot of the cross in Luke's Gospel, where hope transforms into grace through Jesus' mercy toward the penitent thief.

Drawing from the serene imagery of Gippsland Lakes' dawning light, locally, we can see the illumination of how Christ's reign manifests not through power or dominance, but through love and mercy freely given to the undeserving.

As the congregation stands between the Year of Hope and the Year of Grace, we are challenged to embody this transformative grace in our community - to become agents of compassion, forgiveness, and light.

The urgent call rings clear: in Christ's reign, love overcomes fear, mercy triumphs over judgment, and grace conquers death itself. God reigns in forgiveness as we all receive, grace upon grace.



As we walk lightly on sacred ground,
teach us Lord to make known your kingdom,
and let this reflect in all that we do and say.

From Hope to Grace

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Psalms 46

Colossians 1:11-20

Luke 23:33-43

A Year Ending — and a New One About to Begin

Friends, today we stand at a threshold.

The Church Year draws to its close, and we gather under the banner of **Christ the King** – the Reign of Christ.

This is not a day about royal pageantry or triumph.

It's about **completion, fulfilment, and faithfulness.**

It's the moment when the Church gathers up every hope we've carried throughout the year – hope in a fragile world, hope in a wounded community, hope in a turbulent age – and offers it back to Christ, who reigns not in power, but in love.

As we prepare for Advent, we begin to transition from the Year of Hope to the Year of Grace.

Hope looks forward; grace lives in the present.

Hope is promise; grace is presence.

Hope begins the journey; grace carries it forward.

2. Jeremiah — A Hope for a Shepherd Who Will Not Fail

Our first reading from Jeremiah is blunt.

The shepherds — the leaders of Israel — have scattered the sheep.

They have fed themselves instead of the flock.

And into that disappointment, God speaks a promise:

"I will raise a righteous Branch... and he shall reign wisely."

Jeremiah gives us **hope** – not hope in systems, not hope in power, but hope in a shepherd who knows his sheep and gathers what has been scattered.

It's the kind of hope we cling to in our own time – when leadership falters, when communities fracture, when trust is thin.

God says,

"I myself will gather you, and I will raise one who will lead with justice."

Hope starts there.

3. Zechariah's Song — The Dawn from on High

Then we hear the Song of Zechariah – a prayer we repeat morning after morning.

Out of months of silence comes a father's prophecy:

"The dawn from on high shall break upon us."

Hope becomes **light.**

Mercy rises like a sunrise.

The world's shadows are still long, but they no longer have the last word.

Zechariah sings:

"...to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Here on the Gippsland Lakes, we know something of dawn – the soft light over still water, the promise that follows night.

This is what God does in us:

God guides us, gently but surely, into peace.

4. Colossians — Hope Made Cosmic

But Paul lifts our eyes even higher.

Jeremiah shows us a righteous shepherd.

Zechariah shows us a dawning light.

But Paul reveals **the cosmic Christ**:

*"He is the image of the invisible God...
in him all things hold together."*

All things – not just the church, not just our private hearts.

The lake, the bush, nations in turmoil, the wounded and the weary, the lonely and the broken – all things held together by Christ's love.

Hope now becomes **grace**:

A reconciling power, a healing force, a love that gathers the fragments of the world.

In an age where everything seems to be falling apart, Paul gives us this truth:

Christ holds all things together.

5. Luke — The Throne is a Cross

And then comes the Gospel.

Nothing prepares us for this.

Christ the King is enthroned – not in splendour, but in suffering.

A cross.

A crown of thorns.

An inscription meant to mock him.

"This is the King of the Jews."

One thief ridicules him.

But the other, with nothing to offer except trust, says:

"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

And Jesus replies:

"Today you will be with me in paradise."

Here – at the cross – **hope becomes grace**.

A grace that forgives.

A grace that welcomes.

A grace that opens paradise to a broken man in his final breath.

This is the reign of Christ.

Not force.

Not dominance.

But mercy, poured out upon the undeserving – including us.

6. From Hope to Grace — Our Calling Now

So as we close one year and prepare for another:

- Jeremiah gives us **hope in a shepherd who gathers**.
- Zechariah gives us **hope in a dawn that breaks upon us**.
- Paul gives us **grace that heals all things**.
- Luke gives us **grace poured out from the cross**.

Hope has done its work.

Grace now draws us forward.

Our calling is to live the grace we have received:

To be people of compassion in a weary community.

To forgive as we have been forgiven.

To trust that Christ holds all things – even what we cannot fix.

To shine with light as the days grow long and Advent draws near.

The Reign of Christ proclaims:

Love is stronger than fear.

Mercy is stronger than judgment.

Grace is stronger than death.

From hope we have lived.

Into grace we now go.

Amen.

Discussion Questions

The sermon describes a transition from 'hope' to 'grace'. How would you explain the difference between these two concepts, and why is this transition significant?

- **The sermon states** 'Hope looks forward; grace lives in the present. Hope is promise; grace is presence. Hope begins the journey; grace carries it forward.'
- **When in your** life have you experienced a shift from hoping for something to experiencing God's grace in the present moment?

In Jeremiah's passage, God promises to raise a righteous Branch who will lead with justice. How does this ancient promise relate to leadership challenges we see in our world today?

- **The sermon mentions** 'It's the kind of hope we cling to in our own time — when leadership falters, when communities fracture, when trust is thin.'
- **Where do you** see the need for righteous leadership in your own community, and how can you contribute to positive change?

The sermon presents Christ's kingship as being displayed through the cross rather than through power. What does this reveal about God's character and how He chooses to rule?

- **The sermon emphasises** that Christ 'reigns not in power, but in love' and describes the paradox of the King being enthroned on a cross.
- **How does understanding** Christ's kingdom as one of sacrifice and service challenge your own approach to leadership and influence?

Paul's letter to the Colossians describes Christ as the one in whom 'all things hold together.' What comfort might this truth offer in times when things seem to be falling apart?

- **The sermon states** 'In an age where everything seems to be falling apart, Paul gives us this truth: Christ holds all things together.'
- **What areas of** your life feel fragmented right now, and how does the truth that Christ holds all things together speak to those situations?

The sermon ends with three powerful statements: 'Love is stronger than fear. Mercy is stronger than judgment. Grace is stronger than death.' Which of these resonates most with you and why?

- **These statements come** as the final proclamation of what the Reign of Christ means in practical terms.
- **How have you** seen one of these truths demonstrated in your own life or in the lives of others around you?

This five-day devotional will take a moment of grace as we delve into the sermon from this weekend. As we transition from the Year of Hope to the Year of Grace, we invite you to explore how these themes manifest in our lives, guided by scriptures and reflections that bring the message alive.



Weekly Practice: Begin and end each day this week with this quote from the Benedictus, Zechariah's song at the birth of his son, John the Baptist:

"By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Day 1 Jeremiah 23:5

Jeremiah speaks to us about a shepherd, a leader who will not fail, amidst the chaos and shortcomings of past leaders. In this passage, we find hope forged not by human systems or power, but by a divine promise — God's assurance of a leader who understands and nurtures his flock, gathering the scattered and healing the broken.

Just as in Jeremiah's time, we too long for leadership that genuinely cares for and protects its people. This promise extends to our own turbulent age, offering a glimpse of hope when trust in leadership is fragile. As we reflect, let us remember that hope begins as a divine promise and grows into a reality through God's steadfast love.

- How do you experience hope in difficult times when leadership falls short?
- Reflect on a time when you felt scattered or disconnected and how you found your way back.
- What can you do to nurture and care for those around you, emulating the role of a shepherd in your community?
- Pray for clarity and courage for today's leaders to shepherd their people wisely.
- Reflect on your own role as a leader in your community or family and ask for God's guidance.

Day 2 Luke 1:78-79

In Zechariah's Song, the dawn heralds a new beginning, casting light into the shadows of our world. This dawn is not just a physical phenomenon,

but a spiritual awakening — a promise of mercy and peace. Zechariah's words remind us that in the midst of darkness, the light of hope continues to shine, guiding us towards peace.

As the sun rises over Gippsland Lakes, so too does the dawn of God's mercy rise within us. It's an invitation to walk in the light and be conduits of peace, even when the path is fraught with challenges. Our feet are guided by this divine illumination, gently yet firmly leading us toward a more harmonious existence.

- In what areas of your life do you feel the light of dawn breaking, bringing new hope?
- How can you embody the peace of Christ in your daily interactions?
- Reflect on how you can be a source of light to those around you.
- Pray for God's light to guide your steps towards peace and understanding.
- Ask for the courage to be a beacon of hope and mercy in your community.

Day 3 Colossians 1:17

Paul's letter to the Colossians opens our eyes to the cosmic scope of Christ's influence. It tells us that through Him, all things are held together. In an era where fragmentation and chaos seem prevalent, this message serves as a reminder that grace extends beyond personal tribulations and speaks to the collective harmony found in Christ's love.

Christ's unifying presence assures us that nothing is beyond reconciliation. Whether it's personal struggles or national crises, His grace binds every fragment. We are invited to rest in the confidence that, in Christ, there is a power that gracefully mends what is broken, bringing peace to our lives and the world.

- Reflect on aspects of your life that feel disjointed.
- How does the message of Christ holding all things together change your perspective?
- How can you contribute to making your community a more harmonized and graceful place?
- In what ways have you experienced Christ's grace bringing reconciliation in your life?
- Pray for God's grace to bring healing and unity to situations that feel fractured.
- Seek to experience and share the reconciling power of Christ in your personal relationships.

Day 4 Luke 23:42-43

In the Gospel of Luke, we witness the profound moment on the cross where hope transforms into grace. The thief's plea, "Jesus, remember me," and Christ's reply assure us of the transformative power of grace. It is a grace that forgives, a grace that welcomes with open arms — even the most undeserving among us.

This moment on the cross symbolises the ultimate act of mercy. It beckons us to embrace the grace that Jesus freely offers to all. As we reflect, let us ponder the mystery of His reign — a kingdom not built on power, but on love and mercy. This grace invites us into a daily walk of forgiveness and compassion.

- Consider what grace means to you and how it has changed your life.
- Reflect on the moments you have sought mercy and how you can offer the same to others.
- How does understanding Jesus' reign of grace shape your faith journey?
- Thank God for His grace that transforms and heals.
- Pray for a heart that readily forgives and embraces others with compassion.

Day 5 John 1:5

As we conclude, the journey from hope to grace is brought into full circle with the assurance found in John's proclamation: the light of Christ shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. This light signifies not just the closing of a year, but an invitation to step into the new season with grace leading the way.

The passage from hope to grace invites us to live out compassion, love, and understanding. We are called to carry the light of Christ into our communities, trusting that His strength and mercy accompany us. As we approach a new year, let us reaffirm our commitment to be beacons of His grace, knowing that love triumphs over fear and grace overcomes all.

- Reflect on how you can be a light in your community in the coming year.
- What steps can you take to ensure grace is at the forefront of your actions?
- How does the promise of Christ as our light inspire you to face the challenges ahead?
- Pray for the courage to embrace change with grace and faith.
- Seek God's guidance to be a reflection of His light and love in the world.

End notes and further reading

Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke (St Paul's Press) (Johnson)

Rev Dr Andrew McGowan: Andrew's Version: <https://substack.com/@abmcg>

David Adams, Glimpses of Glory, Year C

The following authors as featured at The Worship Cloud

www.theworshipcloud.com

N. T. Wright,

Jane Williams,

P James Woodward,

Paula Gooder

Mark Pryce,

David Perry



Brabarlung Totem

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