

**Lectionary readings: Jeremiah 23: 1-6; Psalm 46;  
Colossians 1: 11-20; Luke 23: 33-43 (Christ the King)**

**For reflection and prayer**

- **Jeremiah 23:** Jeremiah castigates the kings for failing to shepherd their people. God Himself will come and be their shepherd. This is the last Sunday before Advent, a time when we look forward to Jesus' coming among us to set up God's Kingdom in our hearts and, through us, in the world. Are we allowing Jesus to reign over us and shepherd us, influencing who we are and how we live?
- **Psalm 46:** *'Our great God is still our refuge and strength. He knows our problems and fears. Thus we have no business doubting Him even though the earth is convulsed in tragedy, or its human masses threatened by ethnic hatred, disease, drugs, crime or abuse. God continues to reign as all-wise and as almighty as ever. His eternal plan is not cancelled out by the whims of human leaders or the freakish accidents of nature. Nations will destroy each other. Civilisations will perish. The earth itself may one day become a smoking cinder, but God will not leave us. He is forever our sure refuge and strength. Just look around you: read the pages of history. Refresh your flagging spirit with the reminder of His great feats throughout the ages. And you will hear Him speaking: Relax, stop fretting, and remember that I am still your God. I still hold the reins of this world. God is here among us. He continues to be our refuge and strength.'* (Psalms Now)
- **Colossians 1:** This is a far cry from the baby whose birth we will be celebrating soon. This passage reminds

us that we need to look beyond the baby in the manger to Christ, *'the visible image of the invisible God'*. We look at Jesus, God in human flesh, and we see God's purposes for each one of us - to open our hearts to God, as Jesus did, and allow God's life-giving, forgiving love to bring healing to us, and to give ourselves in costly self-giving to others. So let us look forward to celebrating the incarnation, and to letting God be born in our hearts more and more so that the whole church is alive with His life, our hearts pulsating to His heartbeat. What a force for good that would be! What a force for transformation, for healing, for reconciliation, for harmony, for peace.

- **Luke 23:** At first sight perhaps a strange passage to end the Christian year, and yet a fitting reminder, as we begin our journey through Advent to the celebration of Jesus' coming that, just as He came in humility, He departed in humility. And yet His death was the hour of His glory. Even then, He was showing us how to live. How many of us would respond to those who hurt us, or treat us badly, *'Father, forgive them; they don't know what they're doing.'* (v34) This is a real challenge to us. His last words, *'Father, I place my life in Your hands'*, show that He saw His whole life as a willing offering of Himself to God.

**A prayer**

For all the times we have acted in unloving ways, for the times we have spoken without due thought, for the times we have failed to forgive, Father, forgive us. For the way we add to the hurt of the world, for the way we contribute to the brokenness of society, for the disunity of the church, of which we are part, Father, forgive us; renew us and enable us to be the people You created us to be, as we offer ourselves wholly to You. Amen.