



Christ the King Sunday November 22, 2020

Introduction

On this final Sunday of the church year our gospel is Jesus' great story of judgment. In the end, the faithful are those who served Christ by ministering to those who are poor, hungry, naked, sick, or estranged. We celebrate the reign of Christ and his victory over death, yet we await the consummation of all things yet to come. Acknowledging Christ as our merciful ruler, we go forth that his reign may be known in our loving words and deeds.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity,
Father, ✚ Son, and Holy Spirit, one God,
in whose image we are made,
who claims us and calls us beloved. **Amen.**

Silence is kept for reflection.

Holy One,
we confess that we are not awake for you.
We are not faithful in using your gifts.
We forget the least of our siblings.
We do not see your beautiful image in one another.
We are infected by sin
that divides your beloved community.
Open our hearts to your coming,
open our eyes to see you in our neighbor,
open our hands to serve your creation. Amen.

Beloved, we are God's children,
and Jesus, our Beloved, opens the door to us.
Through ✚ Jesus you are forgiven,
by Jesus you are welcome,
in Jesus you are called to rejoice!
Let us live in the promises prepared for us
from the foundation of the world. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn ELW # 408 / LBW # 522

Come, Thou Almighty King

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

O God of power and might, your Son shows us the way of service, and in him we inherit the riches of your grace. Give us the wisdom to know what is right and the strength to serve the world you have made, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Psalmody: Psalm 95:1-7a

¹Come, let us sing to the LORD;

let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.

²**Let us come before God's presence with thanksgiving
and raise a loud shout to the LORD with psalms.**

³For you, LORD, are a great God, and a great ruler above all gods.

⁴**In your hand are the caverns of the earth;
the heights of the hills are also yours.**

⁵The sea is yours, for you made it,
and your hands have molded the dry land.

⁶**Come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the LORD our maker.**

^{7a}For the LORD is our God,
and we are the people of God's pasture and the sheep of God's hand.

Second Reading: Ephesians 1:15-23

In this passage, God is praised for revealing ultimate divine power in raising Jesus from the dead. The resurrected, exalted Christ is Lord of both the church and the entire universe, now and in the age to come.

Read the text [here](#).

Gospel: Matthew 25: 31-46

Jesus compares himself to a king who moves among his subjects to see how he is treated: what is done for the least of those who belong to his family is truly done for him.

Read the text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

It seems that for the last several months, I have heard over and over again from people who are deeply discouraged – even depressed - by all the events of this year. You know the list: topped by the Covid-19 pandemic, it includes political division, deadly wildfires, a record-breaking hurricane season that still isn't over, and even murder hornets. We have all heard the not-quite joking reference to having odd and dangerous events on a 2020 bingo card. Most of us are ready for this year to be over, even if we realize that the troubles of this year will certainly spill over into next year.

So let me be the first to remind you that this Sunday is the final Sunday of this church year. Our texts today are filled with powerful words and vivid images that practically paint a picture for us of Jesus Christ as the Almighty King of All that we celebrate today on Christ the King Sunday.

Later this week we will celebrate Thanksgiving and next Sunday, we have a fresh start as we will begin a new liturgical year with the First Sunday of Advent. But before we rush into our celebration of Thanksgiving and our preparations for Christmas during Advent, we pause today to remember that no matter how challenging our days have been or how wonderful we hope our holiday celebrations will be, we can always trust in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

In our second lesson from today, we read a portion of an encouraging letter to the Christians at Ephesus. I hope that you might hear that today as words of encouragement and gratitude written to you – especially in these difficult times. I am borrowing from **The Message**, a paraphrase of scripture written by Eugene Peterson, so that we can all hear this passage in a new way:

“When I heard of the solid trust you have in the Master Jesus and your outpouring of love to all the followers of Jesus, I couldn't stop thanking God for you—every time I prayed, I'd think of you and give thanks. But I do more than thank. I ask—ask the God of our Master, Jesus Christ, the God of glory—to make you intelligent and discerning in knowing him personally, your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is he is calling you to do, grasp the immensity of this glorious way of life he has for his followers, oh, the utter extravagance of his work in us who trust him—endless energy, boundless strength!”

Along with the Ephesians, we hear words of gratitude and encouragement that are directed to us, too. We hear more about the good news behind that thankfulness. Christ is the King of All Creation because he is the eternal Son of God, who left behind his heavenly glory to be born as human baby, who walked this earth to fulfill the Father's plan, who suffered and died on the cross. Then the letter continues...

“God raised him from death and set him on a throne in deep heaven, in charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and no power exempt from his rule. And not just for the time being, but *forever*. He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ’s body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.”

Friends, as part of Christ’s church, WE are central to God’s plan, too. As we live under Christ’s rule, we are called to share the message of God’s love with everyone we encounter. That message about God’s loving plan for the world is good news – the encouraging message - that everyone needs to hear, especially in dark and difficult times like the ones we have all been experiencing.

Beyond words, we are also called to share God’s love with others through our actions: to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit the imprisoned, to comfort the grieving, to care for the sick and suffering, all in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. In doing those things for others, we serve them as if they were Christ. And by serving them, we will truly be serving Jesus Christ our Lord, too.

Let me be clear. Our words and actions do not save us. Even our faith does not save us. God saves us by grace through Christ’s actions. Our encouragement and service to others is our grateful response for all that God has already done for us.

And what better time could there be than Thanksgiving for us to show our gratitude to God through our loving care for one another as we end the church year celebrating that Jesus Christ is indeed King of All! Amen.

Hymn of the Day ELW # 805 / LBW # 495 *Lead On, O King Eternal*

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Nicene Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

Longing for Christ's reign to come among us, we pray for the outpouring of God's power on the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Sovereign of all, train our ears to hear your cry in the needs of those around us. Bless all social ministries of the church through which we seek to serve others as we ourselves have been served. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You cause rain to fall on the just and unjust alike. Direct our use of creation to provide for the needs of all people in ways that are sustainable for the earth. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Bring peace to every place where conflict rages. Grant opportunities for ending divisions among us and usher in your reign of unity and reconciliation.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Heal the sinful divisions we erect between us and release us from systems of oppression and prejudice. Restore our capacity to see your image in those whose dignity we have stripped away. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Pour out the gifts of your Spirit on children and youth throughout the church. Sustain those who work in children's ministry, youth ministry, and campus ministry as they nurture the gifts of young people. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Send comfort, hope, and healing for all who are sick or struggling in these days, especially those we name now. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Thank you for saints now departed who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and tended to the sick. Inspire us by their example, that we may see your presence in those in need around us. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Receive our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Hymn ELW # 434/LBW #530

Jesus Shall Reign

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ruth Ann Sipe.