

Home Service for 11/22/2020

Welcome and Announcements

Although we are worshipping in our church building again, some have health reasons that makes it impossible to do so. Others are worried about those who need them with health issues. We want everyone to be comfortable and to be able to worship so the home services will continue so all may be able to worship Our Heavenly God where ever they are. You might notice a few changes. You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship, just like we are doing in the church building.

When we care for the poor, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and imprisoned, we are caring for Christ. When we love our neighbor, we are really loving God.

Call to Worship:

Sheep and goats are welcome here. Saints and sinners are part of God's world. Come; rejoice in Christ Jesus, who welcomes us all. Come: share in His grace, that we all might become sheep, who feed one another, who show compassion and love, who offer comfort and mercy, who give as we have received. Come; rejoice in Christ Jesus, who welcomes us all!

Opening Prayer:

Glorious God, shine upon us with Your Spirit of wisdom and truth. Enlighten our hearts. Help us to know the hope to which we are called. Reveal your ways, that we might share hope and joy in all that we do, and all that we say. In the light of Christ's love, we pray. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

God of glory, we do not always see your glory in the world around us. When we see a person in need, it is not easy to look him in the eye. When we hear a cry for help, it is not easy to offer her quick assurance. When we know of a lonely prisoner, it is not easy to make that unannounced visit. Forgive us when we fail to see you in our everyday lives. Forgive us when we are afraid to act, afraid to care. Encourage us, God of glory. Help us to see others with the eyes of compassion, that we might be your loving presence in the world. Amen.

Words of Assurance

There is immeasurable greatness in the power of God for those who believe. Trust in the Lord, for God's grace is real. In the name of Jesus Christ, who is above all and in all, you are forgiven!

Read Psalm 100

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

² Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.

³ Know that the LORD is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his^[a];
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.

⁵ For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Prayers of the People:

From the first day of Advent, so long ago, we have come full circle to the celebration of the Reign of Christ, also known as Christ the King Sunday. We have witnessed the wonderful birth, the great healing moments, the teachings that have sustained people throughout the centuries. We cried in sorrow at the Crucifixion and rejoiced with absolute joy on the sunrise of Easter when Jesus conquered our greatest fear, death. We celebrated the great good news of the disciples as they risked everything to finally proclaim the good news to all people. Now on this Sunday, we invite Jesus to enter our hearts.

Sovereign Lord Jesus, come into our hearts today and take your reign. Remind us that your kingdom is a kingdom of hope and light, in which there is no darkness, fear, or sadness. You have called us to be the Kingdom people, living our lives in the knowledge that peace, justice, and hope are not only possible, but can actually be the ruling factor of the world, for those who follow you. There are many who do not acknowledge your presence and your name, O Lord. But in your infinite love and mercy, you have acknowledged and claimed them. Help us to be the kind of disciples that welcome everyone with the words of kindness, that offer acts of mercy and peace to all in need, to proclaim Christ risen and glorified. As we have brought before you, O Lord, the names of people and situations needing

your healing and comforting touch, may we also open our hearts for that same healing and comfort. Remind us that we are never out of your grace and mercy. We know that you will give us the strength and wisdom to be true disciples and we celebrate and honor you, now and forever. AMEN.

Lord's Prayer

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

Read the Lesson: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

¹¹““For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. ¹²As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. ¹³I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. ¹⁴I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. ¹⁶I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

²⁰““Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says to them: See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, ²²I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. ²³I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. ²⁴I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Ephesians 1:15-23

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit^[a] of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 25:31-46

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

⁴⁰ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

⁴⁴ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

⁴⁵ “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

⁴⁶ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Message

Today is Christ the King Sunday. It is the last Sunday of the church year. It is the Sunday we honor Jesus as the king of our lives and the king of the world. The king we worship meets none of the expectations we have set in our minds of what, a king would be like. Jesus is an unlikely king. He is a king who has none of the trappings of kingship, but He rules a kingdom more vast than any king on the earth would ever hope to rule.

We know that it is Christ who has achieved salvation for us through his death and his resurrection. It is through this King of Kings and only through him that salvation comes into our lives. It is because of Christ and his rule, his authority in our lives that changes us from people, who dwell on self to people who look to others so that we can obtain access to the heavenly throne. This king will sit on the throne of judgment and he will separate the sheep from the goats as our gospel lesson tells us.

Jesus is sitting on his throne and gathered before Him will be all the people of the world and He will separate them as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Notice, each group is being separated for what they are, sheep or goats. Jesus doesn't make them sheep or goats. He divides them as He sees them. Sheep on His right hand or his hand of mercy, and the goats on His left hand, His hand of judgment.

Then, Jesus goes on to say how the division was made, upon what basis. The criterion of this judgment is our response to the cries of human need around us. For when we hear that cry and respond out of love, we are hearing the cry of our Lord and responding out of love to Him, because He first loved us. Jesus is saying our response to the needs of others is a reflection of His indwelling love in our hearts. Hopefully we are sheep people, or Jesus people, as we reflect love and we are not goat people, or people who do not love, as we hoard the love of Jesus selfishly in our hearts.

Sheep and goats are not made sheep and goats by the judgment; they are only identified for what they are. Therefore, judgment reveals what has long been true. The deeds of mercy which the sheep performed were not works of merit, but

examples and evidences of the fact they were sheep and not goats. Therefore, judgment is not a threat of something to be feared in the future, but a warning that one day all people will be revealed for what they are now.

The last day is not so much judgment day as it is actually a VERDICT DAY. This is the surprising truth about judgment: it depends ultimately not on what we do, or fail to do, but on what we are -- sheep or goats."

The point Jesus is making in this parable is that our lives are lived each day in a certain style. One style which reflects, the love He has for us as we love our neighbor, and the second style hoards, or keeps Jesus' love inside. It is not shared, or if it is shared, it is shared shrewdly, with only a thought of what can I gain.

Notice, those who have been declared to be sheep are surprised, because they don't remember reaching out as the Gospel tells us. As we let His love flow from us, we will not be conscious of the fact that we indeed respond to the cries of the human condition of sin and brokenness all around us. As we let His love flow from us, we will affect the lives of people, we will make a difference on this earth. We will bring a measure of love, compassion and caring into this world.

Dr. Hoefler has written: "So Jesus is pointing out in this parable of judgment that the final test is not doing good deeds, but being a good person --- being a sheep and not a goat. That is, being the type of person for whom service to those in need is the natural expression of his/her life style. Spontaneous service becomes a holy habit."

The statement that caught my attention was: Spontaneous service becomes a holy habit. Spontaneous means acting by internal impulse, unpremeditated, unguarded. We are to act without fore thought, without conniving, manipulating, calculating, thinking about our gain, or control. This spontaneous action will then become a holy habit, or a way of life. This action of love will become a way of life for us. Jesus is saying it is not enough to love him, but our love for Him is to be reflected in love for our neighbor.

Listen to James 2:14-17: What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

A story that is a great example of what James said and of spontaneous giving:

"A poor man who had a broken leg because of an accident was unable to work on his farm for a long time, and having a large family to care for, he was in a despair situation. Someone decided it would be great to have a prayer meeting to pray for the family. A large number of people turned out to pray. They asked God to help the family by feeding them and providing other necessities.

Suddenly a knock was heard at the church door. Opening it, they found a young farm boy who said, "My pa couldn't attend this meeting tonight, so he just sent his prayers in a wagon."

They looked outside and saw the boy's wagon loaded with potatoes, meat, apples, pumpkins and many other produce from his father's farms."

Spontaneous service is our response to the love of Christ. Spontaneous service is the lifestyle of one who is in Christ and in whom Christ's love dwells. Being declared a sheep on judgment day confirms a lifestyle one has been living.

This King of Kings wants us to not only give spontaneously to others, he wants us to worship him. In our worship of this King, we pray to him, we ask, we thank, we honor him with our prayers, our songs, our very lives. This good shepherd has great knowledge of the needs of His sheep. Because he knows, because He cares, we can and should put our lives into the care of this King of Kings.

On this Christ the King Sunday we worship the King of Kings with song and praise. We allow him to care for us and as He does that we reach out to those around us with His loving touch.

For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. O that today you would hearken to his voice! Amen

Benediction:

Go to seek the lost and bind up the injured. Go to strengthen the weak, and encourage the fainthearted.

Go seek justice and love mercy. Go help the world know the feast of God's justice and the grace of God's mercy. Amen.