

Home Service for November 21, 2021

Welcome and Announcements

You might notice a few changes. You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

Come, rest from your struggles, your worries, and your work. May the Lord of Love reign above every earthly power, and in our hearts as well.

Call to Worship:

Grace to you and peace from the one who is, who was, and who is to come. Grace from Jesus, the faithful witness and lover of our souls. “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come.”

To the one who loves us and who freed us from our sins, to God be the glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

Opening Prayer:

We come this day, rejoicing, in the presence of the King of Kings, Jesus Christ. At his birth the angels proclaimed his name to be Emmanuel, God with us. Today in this place, in this time of worship, may we truly feel the power and presence of Jesus Christ in our lives. May our hearts and spirits be warmed and challenged to proclaim with our lives, "Christ is Lord!". AMEN.

Prayer of Confession:

God of all creation, before time and beyond space, we admit to our human limits as we try to imagine the reign of truth that you envision for us. When we follow worldly powers and stray from the good path you desire for all you have created, give us Jesus. Give us Jesus, O God; not a Jesus high and lifted up, but chained and arraigned by authorities with boldness to tell the truth. Speak through our words and deeds, that your will may be done in our time. Embolden us with the confidence that your reign will one day come. Come, O Strong One, come. Amen.

Words of Assurance

God's promises are everlasting, ordered and secure. God loves us and frees us. Accept God's forgiveness, for we are forgiven. Amen.

Read Psalm 132:1-12

LORD, remember David
and all his self-denial.

² He swore an oath to the LORD,
he made a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob:

³ “I will not enter my house
or go to my bed,

⁴ I will allow no sleep to my eyes
or slumber to my eyelids,

⁵ till I find a place for the LORD,
a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob.”

⁶ We heard it in Ephrathah,
we came upon it in the fields of Jaar:^[a]

⁷ “Let us go to his dwelling place,
let us worship at his footstool, saying,

⁸ ‘Arise, LORD, and come to your resting place,
you and the ark of your might.

⁹ May your priests be clothed with your righteousness;
may your faithful people sing for joy.”

¹⁰ For the sake of your servant David,
do not reject your anointed one.

¹¹ The LORD swore an oath to David,
a sure oath he will not revoke:

“One of your own descendants
I will place on your throne.

¹² If your sons keep my covenant
and the statutes I teach them,
then their sons will sit
on your throne for ever and ever.”

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: 2 Samuel 23:1-7

These are the last words of David:

“The inspired utterance of David son of Jesse,
the utterance of the man exalted by the Most High,
the man anointed by the God of Jacob,
the hero of Israel's songs:

²“The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me;
his word was on my tongue.

³The God of Israel spoke,
the Rock of Israel said to me:

‘When one rules over people in righteousness,

when he rules in the fear of God,
⁴ he is like the light of morning at sunrise
on a cloudless morning,
like the brightness after rain
that brings grass from the earth.’

⁵ “If my house were not right with God,
surely he would not have made with me an everlasting covenant,
arranged and secured in every part;
surely he would not bring to fruition my salvation
and grant me my every desire.

⁶ But evil men are all to be cast aside like thorns,
which are not gathered with the hand.

⁷ Whoever touches thorns
uses a tool of iron or the shaft of a spear;
they are burned up where they lie.”

Read the Epistle Lesson: Revelation 1:4b-8

John,

To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and
from the seven spirits^[a] before his throne,⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the
faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.
To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,⁶ and has made
us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and
power for ever and ever! Amen.

⁷ “Look, he is coming with the clouds,”^[b]
and “every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him”;
and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.”^[c]

So shall it be! Amen.

⁸ “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and
who is to come, the Almighty.”

Read the Gospel Lesson: John 18:33-37

Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you
the king of the Jews?”

³⁴ “Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?”

³⁵ “Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?”

³⁶ Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

³⁷ “You are a king, then!” said Pilate.

Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

Message

Think for a moment, consider your life, what is your greatest challenge? The greatest challenge, whether it is day to day or the future, might be different for each of us. The greatest challenge today for us as believers is to live as believers in a world that challenges Christianity. The greatest challenge today is not to live like the rest of this world, but to live with conviction concerning our Christian faith. This is our greatest challenge!

It was a challenge when Jesus was on the earth. It was a challenge for believers from the very beginning of Scriptures all the way through to present day times. We think of Paul and the early church. Paul first challenged those who were Christians. Then Paul himself was challenged as a Christian, to live as a believer. Christian living is a hard challenge for us today because of the fact that we live in a world that appeals to our senses. We put our confidence and trust in those things that we can see, feel and touch. These are tangible things. When Jesus taught about his kingdom, he taught it is something we cannot see with a naked eye. That is our challenge.

Paul puts the challenge in 2 Corinthians 4:18 this way: “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” Now that is quite a challenge, isn’t it? Paul says we look at those things we can’t see. That is the challenge of our Christian life, to fix our eyes on the invisible kingdom of God. On this last Sunday of the church year, Christ the King Sunday, we are reminded that Jesus is our King. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Jesus said, what is invisible, “My kingdom is not of this world.”

Today in our Gospel reading, we are taken into a conversation between two different kings. And it is true that one king is mightier than the other. But which one is the mighty ruler? Which one represents the true kingdom?

The first ruler we encounter is Pilate. Pontius Pilate was named Governor by the Roman Emperor. He lives in the Governor's palace, a rather ornate residence. He has servants to wait on him, and armies under his command. A criminal could live or die by the word of Pilate. Needless to say, in the eyes of the world, Pilate had quite a bit of power. He looked like a real ruler.

Then, we have Jesus, who is in his very last day before he is going to be put on the cross. A man bound in chains, having just been interrogated by the High Priest, and now led to Pilate, in the hopes of securing Pilate's approval to put Jesus to death. The crime Jesus has committed? He has claimed to be "King of the Jews." To outward appearances, Jesus doesn't appear to be much of a king. He looks, quite honestly, weak and powerless. He will look even less glamorous in a few hours when he is beaten, mocked, and forced to carry the instrument of his own execution up a hill called Golgotha where he will suffer and die for the sins of the world. And yet, although His power is hidden, Jesus Christ is the true king, with all power and authority in heaven and on earth, even as he stands before Pilate.

In the eyes of the world, it appears that Pilate is a mightier ruler than Jesus. Pilate is wealthy, Jesus has only the clothes on His back. Pilate has followers, soldiers, and others who would prevent such treatment, Jesus' own disciples deny knowing Him when it might be dangerous to their own wellbeing. Pilate has the authority to say whether Jesus lives or dies, Jesus is bound in chains, helpless if Pilate decides to end His life.

Yet, what Pilate doesn't know, is that standing before him is Immanuel, God in flesh. Pilate's creator stands before Him, the One who holds all things under His feet. While His authority is hidden by human flesh and a crown of thorns, that doesn't change the fact that the King of Creation stands before Pilate that day. Jesus says of His kingdom: "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my Kingdom is not of this world." Jesus' kingdom was from somewhere else. If it were so earthly and so important, Jesus servants would fight for him to be saved. Christ's kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. That is something the disciples struggled with. It is something that we and others struggle with even today.

God's kingdom was from above and still is. We pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come." We pray for God's kingdom to return, God's kingdom of power on the Last Day when Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead, when he will separate the sheep from the goats. We pray that in the Lord's Prayer. We also

pray for God's kingdom of grace to come. This is praying that the word of God would be spread. In Luke 17, Jesus says that God's kingdom is in the hearts of believers. We can't see into the hearts of believers. We can't see into the hearts of anyone, but God can. He knows how his kingdom is connected in this world from one believer to the next, throughout the world.

Our challenge today is to look beyond those things which would lead us astray and get our hearts right. Rather than being greedy for ourselves or for the things of this world, we fix our eyes on what cannot be seen, God's kingdom. Rather than being distracted in this life by impurity and immorality that surrounds us, we are to fix our eyes on that which we cannot see, Christ's kingdom. Christ's kingdom is spiritual. We are challenged with our new person that God has created in us by faith. We are challenged then to faithfully hear God's word. We are challenged then to realize our faith is important, the faith that God has planted there by his holy word. We are challenged even when the world might attack. Our faith says "Love God above all things." Our faith says, "Love your neighbor as yourself." So we struggle at living in this world. We are challenged to fix our eyes on that which we cannot see. God says to stand firm in your faith and remain faithful.

Christ's kingdom is not of this world. It is a spiritual kingdom. This is a kingdom which comes in all truth.

Today is Christ the King Sunday. We have come to the end of another church year. As we do, we take heed to not look for Christ's presence with us through outward feelings, emotions, or worldly gages of power and glory, but to look where He has promised to be, His Word and Sacrament. Just as He stood before Pilate, when it appeared that Pilate was the greater of the two kings, we are reminded today that His presence with us today may not look like a King when He comes to be with us through Word and Sacrament, but through the eyes of faith, we recognize that our Lord Jesus Christ is with us today through those simple, yet powerful means where He brings us into His kingdom of grace. Looks can be deceiving, but thanks be to God that our King, Jesus Christ, through His Word, tells us where we can find Him, and what He has done for us. Thanks be to God that He has humbled Himself so that we may be forgiven of all of our sins. Amen.

Benediction:

*Go now in peace. Bring the good news of God's eternal love, the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit to all you meet. Go in peace.
AMEN.*