

Christ the King Sunday
November 22nd 2020
Knox-Trinity Fall Worship

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Call to Worship: Psalm 95: 1-7

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

**Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.**

For the Lord is the great God,
the great King above all gods.
In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.

**The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.**

***All: Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;
for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.***

Prayer of Approach

Almighty and everlasting God,
You have declared that you are renewing and redeeming all things,
through your well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Shepherd.
Grant that the people of earth, presently divided through sin,
and enslaved by to our own wills, may be freed by the Holy Spirit,
and brought together under the gentle and loving rule of Christ our King;
Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Righteous God,
You have crowned Jesus Christ as Lord of all.
Still, we confess that while the title of 'king' passes our lips,
we still have not bowed fully before our Shepherd-King,
and are slow to recognize his rule.
We confess that we give allegiance to the powers of this world,
and give our devotion to celebrities, comforts and media.
In doing so, we fail to be shepherded by justice and love.
In your mercy forgive us.
Raise us to acclaim You, as ruler of all;
that we might be obedient to the gospel,
faithful to the commandments,
and loyal ambassadors of grace,
through the power and presence of You,
O Holy Spirit, Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

One of the twenty-four elders said to me, "Stop weeping!
Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the heir to David's throne,
has won the victory. He is worthy to open the scroll and its seven seals."

Then I saw a Lamb that looked as if it had been slaughtered, but it was now standing between
the throne and the four living beings and among the twenty-four elders.

And they sang a new song with these words:

"You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it.

For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation.

And you have caused them to become
a Kingdom of priests for our God.

And they will reign on the earth." *Revelation 5:5-10 (selected verses)*

Friends, join the singing! For in Christ we are forgiven!

Thanks be to God!

Prayer for Illumination

O God, in Jesus Christ we celebrate your power at work.
You raised him from the dead
to rule with you forevermore.
Enlighten the eyes of our hearts,
that we may see the hope
to which Christ calls us,
a realm of eternal peace. Amen.

Scripture:

Epistle

Ephesians 1:15-23

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come.

And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Gospel

Matthew 25:31-46

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory.

All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?

And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?'

And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,

I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'

Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?'

Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'

And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Sermon

And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

I love how these last two verses of the reading from Ephesians sets up the reading from Matthew. The reading from Matthew is apocalyptic, meaning it is revealing something very important to us about the heart of Jesus.

What I mean is that the verses from Ephesians remind us that because Jesus is king he is also the head of the church ... the church being you and me. Paul describes the church as the body of Christ, connected to its supernatural head, Jesus.

Think about our own bodies. It is the head that gives direction, vision and hearing to the rest of the body ... in turn the body receives its instructions for coordination and activity from the brain. In other words the head, through impulses gives information in the form of commandments to all the parts of the body.

The impulse from Jesus to the church is clear ...

'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

When we look after one another we are looking after our head and king.

At first it is hard to get at the positive message of this text. The parable of the sheep and the goats is problematic. First of all it seems like it is pointing to a truth ... that we are saved only by our works of devotion and charity. And this should be terrifying because how can we ever know if we have done enough to earn the cost of our salvation.

And we can't know. That's what is potentially terrifying.

So instead we must trust in the truth that we are not saved by our works at all ... but as our teachings remind us, we are saved by faith in Jesus' ability to save us and that he has done so

on the cross and under the witness of the empty tomb. So instead of fearing that we can never earn heaven, we can trust that Jesus has earned it for us and given us the credit, forgiving our debts.

But now that we remember our salvation is by the free gift of Christ, we are comforted, but now the parable though though emptied of its terror, remains even more puzzling.

What does it mean, if not to judge our works?

Well it isn't in fact so complicated. We may have just missed the point for fear. The point of the parable is not to judge our works, as we have said, but to measure our devotion to our king and head.

I think one of the keys to understanding the parable is sacrifice. And who better to judge sacrifice than the Son of God, sacrificed on a cross, for fear women and men?

Jesus is saying to the sheep in the parable: When you love another to the point of sacrifice, you show that you are just like me: a sacrificial sheep.

Jesus is saying that when you love someone else enough to cause you to sacrifice your own time, your own wealth, your own bread or water, then you love me for what I have already done for you, and not what you might get from me in life.

Jesus is saying to us through the parable: When you sacrifice, you are picking up the impulses of the gospel. You are getting my vibe, says Jesus.

Jesus, as the head of the church, is sending out impulses of loving sacrifice to the body which is the church and the church is you and me. When we sacrifice for the other, in loving charity, we take on the innocence of a sheep -in the pattern of Christ who was the perfect offering ... the perfectly unblemished sheep ... a perfect sacrifice for sins and a perfect sacrifice for all.

And what is the parable really telling us?

It is telling us not to be afraid to sacrifice ... for in sacrifice we are connected to our head ... our King Jesus Christ.

What I love about this parable is that Jesus doesn't require the word of us. We don't have to have millions of dollars. We don't have to have all the time in the world. We don't have to own a restaurant for a grocery store ... we just have to pick up on his impulses of love and sacrifice.

And this is what the goats don't get. They aren't cut off because they don't 'do' anything. They are cut off ... well because they are already cut off as witnessed by their lack of impulse to sacrifice. The goats don't sacrifice because they are connected to Jesus and his impulses to the body which is the church and the church is you and me.

Do you ever get tired of being asked for change. You can't even turn left in your car anymore without getting a sign waved in your face. And when I see that sign I have to check my impulses. Because I admit, my impulses aren't always of a sacrificial nature. But here is what I have learned too. Even if I don't ... or won't give money ... I will give my time and a smile and a kind word ... and almost always I get a smile back and a 'thank you' ... for not ignoring me. And

maybe ... just maybe that smile that is returned to us ... is a reflection of our king and head ... who well pleased with our sacrifice ... small as it is.

You know. I look at our world right now. I like to think sometimes that I can point to the goats. Maybe you think you can too. But you can't. And it isn't our job.

Our job is to trust in our king and connect to his impulses of loving sacrifice to the body which is the church and the church is you and me.

Don't live in fear. Live connected to the one who rejoices in our connection to him.

And hey, I could be wrong ... but doesn't this season need a little more connection? Couldn't this season need even more loving sacrifice?

This isn't a parable for a future time. This is the right time for this parable.

'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Offering

Lord God, Heavenly King, we offer these, our gifts
As a sign of love, devotion and praise.
Through these, as through our praises,
We acknowledge that you are our Lord,
In your name we pray. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Lord Jesus Christ, you proclaimed God's kingdom among us and within us.
In the power of the Spirit, your love is always at work,
bringing good out of evil and life out of death.
We thank you that your love never lets us go,
for you have known the good times and the hard times of this life before us.

You came as one who was hungry and thirsty.
Where people live on the streets today, suffer from hunger, or beg for a meal:

Your kingdom come.
Your will be done.

You came as a stranger in need of welcome.
Where people live lonely lives or feel like strangers in a strange land; where love is lacking and people face rejection for the colour of their skin or the language they speak:

Your kingdom come.
Your will be done.

You came as one who was naked.
Where people lack enough clothing, shelter or life's basic resources; where people live without dignity, exposed to every kind of pain and hardship:

Your kingdom come.
Your will be done.

You came as one who was broken. Where people feel pain in body, mind or spirit;
where someone grieves the loss of a beloved or the future they planned; in places where the
pandemic has done its worst and desperation has moved in:

Your kingdom come.
Your will be done.

You came as a Shepherd.
Where people are led astray or nations are ruled by corrupt or greedy leaders and there is no
peace in the land:

Your kingdom come.
Your will be done.

You came as one who was in prison.
Where people are treated unfairly, targeted or tortured;
where justice has failed and people are punished with cruelty:
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done.

You came as one proclaiming the kingdom of God.
And so we lift up these prayers in your name, Lord Jesus,
knowing that your kingdom is drawing near
and that we meet you in the face of those who cry out to us.
Hasten the day when God will wipe away our tears
and death will be no more as we pray the words you taught us:

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 debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen

Hymn

To God be the glory Great things He has done
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin
And opened the life-gate that all may go in

refrain: Praise the Lord, praise the Lord Let the earth hear His voice
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord Let the people rejoice
Come to the Father Through Jesus the Son
Give Him the glory Great things He has done

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood
To every believer the promise of God
The vilest offender who truly believes
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives ... **refrain**

Great things He has taught us, great things He has done
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son
But purer, and higher, and greater will be
Our wonder, our worship, when Jesus we see ... **refrain**

Commissioning

Mighty and Tender King,
Voice of the voiceless,
Power of the powerless:

We ask, as you send us out,
that your reign be set in our vision.
that we might see your kingdom coming:

A community of wholeness, a realm of peace,
a place where the thirsty find water for body and soul,
and where the hungry are nourished with bread and redemption;

A Dwelling Place where the stranger is welcomed as a friend,
a shelter where the wounded receive healing,
a great hall where those who were captive, enter into dance;

Guide us into this Kingdom, through truth and love,
until we are fully your people by profession and by action,
and to be light, shining with justice and compassion
in bright witness to your Reign and Holy Purpose.

Holy and Anointed One,
Reign now in the world, reign now in our hearts,
Forever and ever. Amen.