

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, November 24th, 2024
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Reign of Christ
Matthew 25:31-46

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

O come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!
For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.

In his hand are the depths of the earth;
the heights of the mountains are his also.
The sea is his, for he made it,
and the dry land, which his hands have formed.
O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!
For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Lord God,
when we struggle to worship you as Lord,
show us again the beauty and power of your rule.
Teach us again that serving you is the path to true freedom.
May your Holy Spirit strengthen us today,
leading us to honor and worship you more deeply,
not only with the words we sing
but also, with the lives we lead before your face,
through Jesus, our reigning Lord. **Amen.**

Children's Hymn

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
 Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

**We come, O Lord, on this day of glory to confess our lack of trust.
 While we sing of your lordship over all creation,
 we have too often acted as though you are powerless
 in the face of today's events.
 Help us to live with confidence in your presence today
 and in hope for life with you forever. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Do not weep!
 See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed.
 With his blood he has purchased people for God
 from every tribe and language and people and nation.
 He has made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
 and they will reign on the earth.
Thanks be to God!

The 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen.**

Hymn: "May the Mind of Christ, My Saviour" (video)

Responsive Reading**Psalms 119:81-88**

⁸¹ My soul longs for your salvation;
 I hope in your word.

⁸² **My eyes long for your promise;
 I ask, "When will you comfort me?"**

⁸³ For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,
 yet I have not forgotten your statutes.

⁸⁴ How long must your servant endure?
When will you judge those who persecute me?

⁸⁵ The insolent have dug pitfalls for me;
they do not live according to your law.

⁸⁶ All your commandments are sure;
they persecute me with falsehood; help me!

⁸⁷ They have almost made an end of me on earth,
but I have not forsaken your precepts.

⁸⁸ In your steadfast love give me life,
that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth.

Anthem (Music Ministry)

Prayer for illumination (Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Matthew 25:31-46

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Sermon

Next Sunday is the first Sunday of Advent and the beginning of a New Church Year, so today, on what is considered the End of the Church Year, we celebrate and honor Jesus Christ as King. Today is a day on which we are meant to remember through the power of the Holy Spirit that God called us to acknowledge that Jesus Christ alone is worthy to be our Lord. That Jesus Christ alone will be the one to judge the world in righteousness and he is the only path we have to Salvation and Eternal Life in God's kingdom.

Our Scripture this morning is drawn from the book of Matthew, when Jesus Christ himself is speaking on his future judgement of the world for the second time.

The first time he speaks of his future judgement comes at the end of the sermon on the mount where he says.

Matthew 7:21-23

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

These are not the words any of us want to hear on the day of our judgement. Jesus seems to be telling those who take their faith casually and those who fake their faith, do not really have a relationship with Jesus in their hearts. Just doing acts of good is not what Jesus is after, James said works without faith has no meaning, and Jesus is saying the same thing here. It is not enough to just be a good person in this world, you need to have a personal relationship with God. When you are in relationship with God, your thoughts, words and deeds will naturally flow out of that relationship with the Lord and you will live a Christ-like life.

We need to remember that people can trick us, they can fool the entire world into believing whatever they want the world to believe, however, Jesus Christ knows our hearts. He knows us in the most intimate way possible and his judgement is not based upon the perception of the world around us, but upon what is in our hearts. This is why we need to respond to others in the same way that Jesus Christ would, because if we are doing so for any other reason, Jesus knows. Just look at the example he gives today of his judgement and how personal and intimate it is.

Matthew 25:35-36 & 45

³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.

Followers of Jesus Christ are expected to look after others, to help people in need, regardless of who they are, regardless of their financial situation, regardless of their social standing, regardless of their race, religion or ethnicity. Saint and sinner alike, we are called to look after others in this world.

This is what the early Christians did. They looked after the outcasts of their society, just because the outcasts of society needed looking after. They looked after the widows and orphans; Christians were the only ones who would go out and save abandoned babies off the streets of Rome. Christians, many who were struggling to survive themselves, would share what little they had with anyone else who was in need, they did not feel the need to check ID or advertise the help they were giving, they helped because that is what Jesus would do.

That is the key, they helped because they knew Jesus would help, they were not trying to earn a way into heaven or get credit with God for being good. They helped because their relationship with God changed their hearts to wanting to help others, sometimes without them even recognizing their change in behavior. They were not choosing to help for any worldly reasoning; instead, they were just naturally responding to someone in need.

This is why we need to examine our own hearts seriously, because no matter how good we believe we are in worldly terms, it is not the world's standards that we are going to be measured by, instead we will be judged by Jesus's standards as he looks directly into each of our hearts for the real motives behind our actions. It is easy to look around and compare ourselves to others in this world and by doing so believe we are good people, but when we compare ourselves to Jesus, we recognize just how fallen we truly are.

Knowing God is more important than knowing religion and appearing good in this world.

A great example of this came out of one of the larger Christian Universities in the States. Two people were chosen to give a rendition of Psalm 23 to a class that was focusing on how hearing the Word of God proclaimed can change the way we understand the Word of God. It is called 'Lectio Divina' in theological circles and it is something that I use at times, reading the Word of God in different ways, with emphasis on different words, or in different tones or at different speeds, seeing if it helps me understand the Word better.

They had chosen two individuals to recite the Psalm to the class, one was a professor, who was trained in drama and music and had been a speaker for a long time. The second was a first-year student who had not even chosen a major.

The professor recited the Psalm to the class first, and as you can imagine it was delivered with great beauty and had a powerful impact on the listeners. When he finished the class asked him

to recite it again so that they could hear the beautiful Words of God once again. He ended his second recital with a huge round of applause.

Then the first-year student took their turn. They had no training in music or drama or speech. So, they spoke from the heart, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...'

Psalm 23: 1-6

¹ The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

³ He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness

for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord

forever.

When they finished reciting the Psalm the class was silent, you could hear a pin drop. The students sat there quietly, deep in thought, deep in prayer, and deep in the Word of God.

After a long moment the professor stood up and spoke to the class. He said, 'The difference between what you have heard from my student and what you have heard from me is simple, I may know the Psalm, but they know the Shepherd.'

The professor had all of the knowledge, skills and abilities to be a wonderful presenter of God's Word. However, the student knew God in their heart. There is a differencing between reading the bible with our minds and reading the Bible with our hearts. There is a difference in being part of a religion and being one of God's children. There is a difference between intellectually knowing God and heartfully loving God.

And this is what Jesus is speaking about in today's Scripture. It does not matter how much Scripture you memorize; it does not matter how many facts about Jesus, God or the church you

know. It does not matter what church you go to, what denomination you belong to or what view of the rapture you take in this world. What matters is your heart and your relationship with God, and this is why on the day of judgement there is not a pop-quiz, or an accountant that calculates your good deeds vs. bad deeds, but Jesus Christ himself who looks directly into your heart.

Yes, we need to study the Bible, we need to know the Scripture, we need to be part of a Bible believing church, all so that we can have a right relationship with God. We need to know that facts and the truths so that we can know God. This is why the watered-down Scripture that is being given to people in so many places are dangerous, it allows people to get into a relationship with a god of their choice, not the God of the Scripture.

Martin Luther, the father of the reformation said it this way, 'I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and kept me in true faith.'

Luther is saying that even our faith, even our belief in Christ is not something that we can take credit for, because if it was not for the love of God working through the church, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we would not have even had the opportunity to learn the truth of the Scriptures, let alone come into a relationship with God.

We live in a culture where the truth of God's Word has become difficult to find. We all hear the phrase 'God is love' echoed over and over, and that has been interpreted as, 'God loves me, he would never send a good person like me to hell.' People have willingly fooled themselves into believing that a 'Holy God' will accept them even if they never humble themselves before Him, even if they live their entire life in disobedience of Him, even if they are unholy. The scripture says otherwise, God looks into your heart and makes his judgment.

God expects our hearts to be a reflection of his teachings. God expects the true nature of our relationship with God to be evident in our thoughts, words and deeds. He expects us to be out there, out in the world outside of the church, bringing the truth of his Word, and the love of Jesus Christ to the lost in this world.

And when we stand before the King of Kings in judgement, he will look into our hearts for a reflection of who he is, and that will determine our place in eternity. We need to have the love of Jesus Christ in our hearts, a love that is willing to tell people the truth of what the Scripture says, a love that is willing to get angry at the ways of this world and still love the people that are trapped in those ways, a love that is willing to sacrifice self for the benefit of those we love.

There is a tale told of a mother and her children who were on the run during the French revolution. They had wandered through the forest for three days with no food and no real rest. They were trying to survive on the roots, berries and even leaves that they found for sustenance.

Then on that third day as they were out foraging, they heard someone approaching, so they hid in a bush. A group of soldiers approached and one of them heard some rustling in the bush and prodded it with the bayonet of his rifle, to determine what was hiding.

When he saw the starving woman and her children, he immediately reached into his ration pouch and pulled out his ration of bread for that day and gave it to them. The mother accepted it eagerly, and immediately broke it into two pieces, giving half to each of her children.

One of the other soldiers asked his comrades, 'Is she not hungry?' 'No', he replied, 'it is because she is a mother and loves her children more than herself.'

That is the true nature of our faith, we love others more than ourselves the same way that God loves us.

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, he too took a loaf of bread, and he broke it and shared it with all of us. Then he went to the cross and gave up all that he had, he was beat, spit on, mocked and suffered, he had a crown of thorns placed upon his head, he was nailed to the cross and left to die one of the worst possible deaths a human could suffer, all with a mocking sign that called him the King of the Jews over his head.

Yet he was not just the King of the Jews, He is the King of Kings, and that is why we praise and worship him.

That bread he broke on the night of his death with his disciples, the words he spoke, the Scriptures he shared, all continue to feed us, nourish us, so that we may come to know Jesus in our lifetime, and by doing so receive his Redeeming Grace and our Eternal Salvation.

May God's Spirit continue to be at work withing our church and within our congregation, as we continue to grow in our relationship with the Lord, so that we can live as disciples, bringing glory to God's name as we share the Gospel with others in our community, acting as the Salt and Light of God's Word.

Let us pray,

Sanctify, Calm, Cleanse, Strengthen

Lord God,
 Father of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ,
 your name is great,
 your nature is wonderful,
 your goodness is inexhaustible,
 you are God and Master of all things,
 and are blessed forever.

You sit between the cherubim,
 and are glorified by the seraphim.
 Before you stand thousands of thousands
 and ten thousand times ten thousand,
 the hosts of holy angels and archangels.
 Sanctify our souls and bodies and spirits,
 calm our fears
 cleanse our consciences,
 and drive out every evil thought,
 every selfish desire,
 envy, pride, hypocrisy,
 falsehood, deceit, anxiety,
 covetousness, arrogance, laziness,
 malice, anger, grudges,
 blasphemy, deeds, or thoughts
 that are contrary to your holy will.
 O Lord, since you love us all,
 give us the strength to boldly call on you
 in the freedom of Christ,
 without condemnation,
 with a pure heart and a contrite soul,
 with undivided attention
 and with sanctified lips,
 as our holy God and Father in heaven.

Source: Liturgy of St. James, from Ancient Collects, ed. William Bright, p. 1#1.

Hymn: “The Lord’s My Shepherd” (video)

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Offertory Prayer
(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn: “Be Thou My Vision” (video)

Pastoral Prayer

Sovereign King,
 we praise you for your just and righteous reign over the cosmos:
 for the order you give to creation . . .
 for your sovereign rule over the nations . . .
 for your faithfulness to your church . . .
 for your lordship in our lives . . .

You are at once King and servant, willing to give your life
 and caring even for what we might count as insignificant.
 So, we approach your throne knowing you will listen to our prayers
 for creation and its care . . .
 for the nations of the world . . .
 for our nation and its leaders . . .
 for this community and those who are in authority . . .
 for the church universal as it works on your behalf . . .
 for this local church in its ministry . . .
 for persons with particular needs . . .
 We pray in your name, O Christ, our sovereign servant King. **Amen.**

Benediction

Grace to you and peace
 from him who is and who was and who is to come,
 and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,
 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness,
 the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.
 To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood,
 and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father,
 to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. **Amen.**