

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2021

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

CHRIST the KING SUNDAY

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP *(from Psalm 48)*

One: Let us celebrate the Lord throughout the world!
All: May the name of the Lord be honored among all people!
One: For “great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.”
All: Let us rejoice in the great and merciful Lord our God!

OPENING HYMN “You Servants of God, Your Master Proclaim” GtG 299 *(Verses 1, 2, & 4)*

One: You servants of God,
your Master proclaim,
All: and publish abroad Christ’s wonderful name.
One: The name all victorious of Jesus extol,
**All: whose kingdom is glorious,
who rules over all.**

One: Ascended on high,
All: almighty to save,
One: he still remains nigh;
All: his presence we have.
One: The great congregation his triumph shall sing,
All: ascribing salvation to Jesus our King.

One: Then let us adore and give him his right:
All: all glory and power,
One: all wisdom and might,
**All: all honor and blessing,
with angels above,**
One: and thanks never ceasing,
All: and infinite love!

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UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

We rejoice in you, O Lord, all the while knowing that our song frequently rings hollow. For our lives all too often deny your Lordship. We love you with only half a heart and half a soul and half a mind. The choices we make demonstrate our allegiance to other claims upon our time and energy. Yet we know enough to come before you to beg your forgiveness. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us. Help us to acknowledge your rightful claim over all of life, including ours. So mold our hearts that we may look to you in every thought, word, and deed. Come to us, Lord God, and make us your own. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

One: People of God, the mercy of the Lord is from
everlasting to everlasting—
Believe this good news:
God loves us, forgives us,
and frees us from our sins;
therefore be at peace.

THE PEACE

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)

THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READINGS II Samuel 23:1-7
John 18:33-37
Revelation 1:4(b)-8

II SAMUEL 23:1-7 (New Revised Standard Version)

¹ *Now these are the last words of David:*

*The oracle of David, son of Jesse,
the oracle of the man whom God exalted,
the anointed of the God of Jacob,
the favorite of the Strong One of Israel:*

² *The spirit of the Lord speaks through me,
God's word is upon my tongue.*

³ *The God of Israel has spoken,
 the Rock of Israel has said to me:
One who rules over people justly,
 ruling in the fear of God,*
⁴ *is like the light of morning,
 like the sun rising on a cloudless morning,
 gleaming from the rain on the grassy land.*

⁵ *Is not my house like this with God?
 For God has made with me an everlasting covenant,
 ordered in all things and secure.
Will God not cause to prosper
 all my help and my desire?*

⁶ *But the godless are all like thorns that are thrown away;
 for they cannot be picked up with the hand;*
⁷ *to touch them one uses an iron bar
 or the shaft of a spear.
 And they are entirely consumed in fire on the spot.*

JOHN 18:33-38 (New Revised Standard Version+)

³³ *Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"* ³⁴ *Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?"* ³⁵ *Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?"* ³⁶ *Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish authorities. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here."* ³⁷ *Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?"* *Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."*

REVELATION 1:4(b)-8 (New Revised Standard Version)

⁴ *... Grace to you and peace from the one who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before the throne,* ⁵ *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, ⁶ *and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

⁷ *Look! He is coming with the clouds;
 every eye will see him,
 even those who pierced him;
 and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.*

So it is to 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.*

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON “The Upside Down and Right Side Up King” by Pastor Bill Vincent

“Hosanna in the highest!” we hear, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Then, “Crucify him!”

Both actually seem out of place, here on this third Sunday of November. Reading the Gospel of John passage seems out of place.

For that matter, Jesus seemed out of place...to many people.

They may not have known what place he belonged. But they knew – if only intuitively – that he didn't fit in their place, their system, their way of doing things, their world.

And indeed, they were right.

Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not from this world.”

So they crucified him, got him out of the way. And that was that. He had been judged out of place, out of order. And his death confirmed their verdict and their way.

Or so they thought.

As we read this passage from John, it appears, for all intents and purposes, that Jesus is the one that is on trial.

Actually, the reverse is closer to the truth.

It is Pilate who is on trial: Pilate and his way, Pilate and his world; Pilate and OUR world.

Think back to II Samuel 23, speaking of

*One who rules over people justly,
ruling in the fear of God.*

One of my first reactions: “The one who rules rightly” is...an anomaly, a rarity, like unheard of. A leader like this is seemingly non-existent. It seems most leaders are only in it for the prestige or power, to feather their own nest. As we witness the sparring that takes place in Congress, and other halls of government. They say what they need to say to get their way.

But we need not feel too good about ourselves as opposed to those corrupt politicians, or “whomever” out there.

Out of fear for the security of our own self-made world, we will gossip behind other people's backs, spread rumors and out-and-out lies, or keep conveniently silent to discredit those who disagree with us.

Instead of talking and listening in order to understand, we turn up the volume of our own rhetoric in order to drown out what others say so we don't have to listen.

Ours is a world where rhetoric is king, and power is viceroy.

And into this fray of jockeying for position and power, and fighting for turf and territory, steps this man Jesus.

“Are you the King of the Jews?”

“So you are a king?”

Pilate asks.

“Yes, in a way,” Jesus says, “but not your way.”

“If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish authorities.”

he responds.

C.K. Barrett points out,

Kings of this world naturally fight for supremacy; that Jesus and his followers do not do so shows that his kingdom is of a different order. (The Gospel According to St. John, p.537)

Jesus may be king, yes; but of a different order, in a different manner. King of a different world, yet king of all the world.

What makes him a king is not military might nor political prowess.

What makes him a king is his testifying to the truth and embodying that truth: the truth of God's way; the truth of our intended relationship to God and each other.

What makes him a king is his willingness to give of his life and give up his life in order to do the will of his Father in heaven.

What makes him a king is his greatness, not in lording it over others, but in serving others...and calling us to do the same.

Revelation proclaims him king:

the ruler of the kings of the earth.

The resurrection proclaims him Lord.

He is Christ, the King,

who rules over people justly,

ruling in the fear of God.

He is Christ, the King, who rules in truth, because he is the truth.

He is Christ, the King, who rules over all, not by grasping power, but by the power given him by God.

This is the truth we proclaim.

It is the truth we lay hold of, because it is the truth that lays hold of us.

So we proclaim that he is Lord of all of life...and that includes Pilate, and all the rest.

“But,” you say, “all the evidence suggests otherwise.”

So, it calls for faith...with a little help.

Go back to our scripture passages.

II Samuel 23 gave a hint. And it was true.
John 18 presents a picture. And it is true.
Revelation 1 shares a vision. And there is no need for us to doubt it is true.
It takes faith. As the letter to Hebrews puts it, that
assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1
NRSV)

Like the assurance to those to whom Revelation was written: a people under persecution, hounded and hunted. And in the midst of their pain and suffering, trials and tribulations, they were told to remember, Jesus is Lord...already.

Twila Paris is the well-known Christian singer. With numerous awards and a wide-spread popularity for her songs, **“You might think she had it all together. But when a series of personal challenges and her husband’s lengthy illness made her feel hopeless, she read what the Bible says about God’s faithfulness and sovereignty. Her experience inspired her to write”** these words:

**God has never let you down
Why start to worry now?
God is still the Lord of all we see
And is still the loving Father
Watching over you and me**
...
This is no time for fear
...
Don’t lose the vision here
...
**There is one thing that has always been true
It holds the world together**
(CHORUS:)
**God is in control
We believe that God’s children will not be forsaken**
...
**We will choose to remember and never be shaken
There is no power above or beside God, we know
God is in control**
 (“God Is In Control” 1994)

That’s what it means to affirm that Christ is King.

This is not intended to be some “pie in the sky” philosophy of life, somehow detached from reality.

For remember: the One who “reigns in power” is also the Crucified One, intimately acquainted with the pain and tragedy, the chaos and injustice of life.

Here is a king who wears, not a crown of gold, but a crown of thorns; who lives not detached from the pain of his people, but intimately involved in the midst of their pain.

Here is a king who does not command us to diminish ourselves and grovel at his feet, but who instead comes to us and kneels before us and washes our feet.

Here is a king who rules, not by intimidation, but by love.

And in all of this, we, as his followers, are called to do the same:

“But whoever wishes to become great among you [he says,] must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Humankind came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:42-45 NRSV)

Paul paints the big picture when he writes,

*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death--
even death on a cross.
Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

(Philippians 2:5-11 NRSV)

So,

when the world is going to hell on a sled,
when the world is falling apart,
when YOUR world is falling apart,

let us remember:

Jesus is Lord,
Christ is King – still.

And ‘God IS in control’.

So Paul could affirm, in his own troubles, and in ours,

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always

carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. (II Corinthians 4:7-11 NRSV)

...in our lives.

That's how we see Christ's Lordship among us now: in his sustaining and transforming work in our lives, in his guiding us and protecting us, providing for us and upholding us as his followers as we seek to walk in his way.

So that in our life – even if not in the world around us – it might be clear that Jesus Christ is King.

Amen.

HYMN “At the Name of Jesus” GtG 264

- 1. At the name of Jesus
every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess him
King of glory now;
'tis the Father's pleasure
we should call him Lord,
who from the beginning
was the mighty Word.**

- 2. Humbled for a season
to receive a name
from the lips of sinners
unto whom he came,
faithfully he bore it
spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious,
when from death he passed;**

- 3. Bore it up triumphant,
with its human light,
through all ranks of creatures,
to the central height,
to the throne of Godhead,
to the Father's breast,
filled it with the glory
of that perfect rest.**

- 4. Christians, this Lord Jesus
shall return again,
with his Father's glory
o'er the earth to reign;**

**for all wreaths of empire
meet upon his brow,
and our hearts confess him
King of glory now.**

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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**We trust in Jesus Christ,
fully human, fully God.
Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
preaching good news to the poor
and release to the captives,
teaching by word and deed
and blessing the children,
healing the sick
and binding up the brokenhearted,
eating with outcasts,
forgiving sinners,
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.
Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,
Jesus was crucified,
suffering the depths of human pain
and giving his life for the sins of the world.
God raised this Jesus from the dead,
vindicating his sinless life,
breaking the power of sin and evil,
delivering us from death to life eternal.**

**In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives,
even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,
praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"**

(from A Brief Statement of Faith, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Confessions)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Pastor: Hear our prayer...
People: ...Lord of all life.

THE LORD'S PRAYER (*Contemporary*)

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

OFFERING

Invitation

Reflection

**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

With joy we celebrate your power and presence, O Lord. Thank you for your tender guidance of us. Thank you for your abundant providing for us. Thank you for your gracious love to us. May we, in our thoughts and words and deeds, proclaim you Lord of all. Use us and all that we offer to proclaim your glory and extend your blessing to others; in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** "Come, Christians, Join to Sing" GtG 267

**1. Come, Christians, join to sing:
Alleluia! Amen!
Loud praise to Christ our King:
Alleluia! Amen!
Let all, with heart and voice,
before his throne rejoice;
praise is his gracious choice:
Alleluia! Amen!**

2. Come, lift your hearts on high:

Alleluia! Amen!

Let praises fill the sky:

Alleluia! Amen!

He is our guide and friend;

to us he'll condescend;

his love shall never end:

Alleluia! Amen!

3. Praise yet our Christ again:

Alleluia! Amen!

Life shall not end the strain:

Alleluia! Amen!

On heaven's blissful shore

his goodness we'll adore,

singing forevermore:

Alleluia! Amen!

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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

Pastor: ...And let the gathered people of God say...

People: ...Amen.

POSTLUDE

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