

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2022

First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

**CHRIST the KING SUNDAY**

**GATHERING**

**PRELUDE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP** *(from Isaiah 12)*

One: "Sing praises to the Lord, who has done gloriously.  
Let this be known in all the earth."  
**All: If the seas join in praise, how much more should we.  
If hills are alive with song, let us, too, awake to sing.**  
One: "Surely God is our salvation.  
We will trust, and will not be afraid."  
**All: Shout aloud and sing for joy,  
in the midst of our joys and our sorrows.**  
One: "For the Lord God is our strength and our might."  
**All: May we remember together,  
today and every day,  
that you, O God, have done marvelous things.**

**\*OPENING HYMN** "Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above" GtG 645

1. **Sing praise to God, who reigns above,  
the God of all creation,  
the God of power, the God of love,  
the God of our salvation.  
With healing balm my soul is filled,  
and every faithless murmur stilled:  
to God all praise and glory!**
2. **What God's almighty power hath made  
God's gracious mercy keepeth;  
by morning glow or evening shade  
God's watchful eye ne'er sleepeth.  
Within the kingdom of God's might,  
lo! all is just and all is right:  
to God all praise and glory!**

*(continued...)*

3. **The Lord is never far away,  
but, through all grief distressing,  
an ever present help and stay,  
our peace and joy and blessing,  
as with a mother's tender hand  
God gently leads the chosen band:  
to God all praise and glory!**

4. **Thus all my toilsome way along  
I sing aloud thy praises,  
that all may hear the grateful song  
my voice unwearied raises.  
Be joyful in the Lord, my heart;  
both soul and body, take your part:  
to God all praise and glory!**

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#### **UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**Dear God, we need your grace and mercy, for we have fallen by the wayside and strayed from your path. You have demonstrated your trustworthiness, yet still we are fearful of life. Your love has touched us, yet our hearts are still cold toward others. Forgive us, gracious God. Deal tenderly with us in your mercy. By the power of your Spirit, transform us in the image of your Son that we might be your people to your glory. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

#### **SILENT CONFESSION**

#### **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

**One:** Hear the good news:  
Christ is merciful to all who turn to him in repentance.  
**All:** **In the name of Jesus Christ,  
we are forgiven.**

#### **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 READING** Isaiah 65:17-25  
Luke 21:5-19  
II Thessalonians 3:6-13

ISAIAH 65:17-25 (New Revised Standard Version)

<sup>17</sup> *For I am about to create new heavens  
and a new earth;  
the former things shall not be remembered  
or come to mind.*

<sup>18</sup> *But be glad and rejoice forever  
in what I am creating;  
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy,  
and its people as a delight.*

<sup>19</sup> *I will rejoice in Jerusalem,  
and delight in my people;  
no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it,  
or the cry of distress.*

<sup>20</sup> *No more shall there be in it  
an infant that lives but a few days,  
or an old person who does not live out a lifetime;  
for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth,  
and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.*

<sup>21</sup> *They shall build houses and inhabit them;  
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.*

<sup>22</sup> *They shall not build and another inhabit;  
they shall not plant and another eat;  
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,  
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.*

<sup>23</sup> *They shall not labor in vain,  
or bear children for calamity;  
for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord—  
and their descendants as well.*

<sup>24</sup> *Before they call I will answer,  
while they are yet speaking I will hear.*

<sup>25</sup> *The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,  
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;  
but the serpent—its food shall be dust!  
They shall not hurt or destroy  
on all my holy mountain,  
says the Lord.*

LUKE 21:5-19 (New Revised Standard Version)

<sup>5</sup> When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, Jesus said, <sup>6</sup> “As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.”

<sup>7</sup> They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?” <sup>8</sup> And he said, “Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is near!’ Do not go after them.

<sup>9</sup> “When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.” <sup>10</sup> Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; <sup>11</sup> there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

<sup>12</sup> “But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. <sup>13</sup> This will give you an opportunity to testify. <sup>14</sup> So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; <sup>15</sup> for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. <sup>16</sup> You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. <sup>17</sup> You will be hated by all because of my name. <sup>18</sup> But not a hair of your head will perish. <sup>19</sup> By your endurance you will gain your souls.

II THESSALONIANS 3:6-13 (New Revised Standard Version)

<sup>6</sup> Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us. <sup>7</sup> For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, <sup>8</sup> and we did not eat anyone’s bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. <sup>9</sup> This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. <sup>10</sup> For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. <sup>11</sup> For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. <sup>12</sup> Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.

## **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**SERMON** “Yearning for Joy, Experiencing Turmoil” by Pastor Bill Vincent

The lectionary is a selection of scripture passages, chosen through the wisdom of the church, to be used over 3 yearly cycles, each year focused on one of the first three gospels.

Each year begins with Advent and the anticipation of the birth of Christ, and ends with Christ the King Sunday – like this Sunday. The year builds from the anticipation of the birth and coming of Christ; through his ministry, death and resurrection; the commissioning of the church;

our life in Christ; and concludes with the anticipation of the culmination of history and the coming of the kingdom of God – the ‘big day’ – and crowning Christ as King.

Sometimes the connection between the passages chosen for a particular Sunday – sometimes the connection is obvious; sometimes it is not so obvious.

So I was reading the passages for this Sunday, and this is the connection that struck me.

The people have returned from exile. As they settle into Jerusalem and the surrounding area, they experience a contrast between what they envisioned and their present reality, where there is weeping and distress; where lives are too often cut short; where much of the food they grow has to be used to pay the foreign power under whose control they still live; and where God seems far away...and strangely silent.

But then they hear this word about the wondrous thing God is going to do: the culmination of history; the coming of the kingdom of God, as we would say it, and do every week: “Thy kingdom come...” (Lord’s Prayer).

A word of new heavens and a new earth, with no more crying or distress; with long life for all; where they enjoy the benefits of their own harvest; and where their relationship with God is close and immediate.

Through the years, others may have used different imagery or language.  
Some speak of “eternal life.”

Others speak of the coming of the kingdom of God here on earth.

A time when

*“[God] will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
Death will be no more;  
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
for the first things have passed away.”*

(Revelation 21:4 NRSV)

Or some might use the term “heaven.”

The Study Catechism of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) asks,

**Won't heaven be a boring place?**

(An interesting question in itself.) And part of the answer is,

**Our deepest, truest delights in this life are only a dim foreshadowing of the delights that await us in heaven.** (Question 88, The Study Catechism: Full Version, 1998)

Yes, we hear those words and discern that vision.

But all of that is far from the reality of our present lives.

So there is a yearning of our hearts.

And there are times when we pray, “God help! God do something about this world! O Lord, come and clean up this mess we have made!”

Echoing the psalmist’s cries, “How long, O Lord?”

Echoing the prophets’ cries, “How long, O Lord?”

So we cry, “Maranatha: Come, Lord. Come, Lord Jesus, come.”

Only...that joy we yearn for does not come easily.

So the disciples ask Jesus about this 'coming time'. And the imagery he uses seems wild and speculative...at first. Then maybe not so much: "*wars, insurrections; nation against nation; famines and plagues.*" Sound familiar?

Actually the imagery is meant to be general.

And it must be said, No, we don't know the time, the hour, the day. And speculating about it probably gains us nothing.

For the point is that the joy we yearn for does not come easily. We may yearn for it, we may say we want it, but there is resistance to the kingdom's coming.

So Jesus speaks about arrest and persecution...and even betrayal by those closest to us.

Trials and difficulties we know all too well. Testing and tribulations.

The coming of this joy that we long for – it's coming involves sacrifice on our part. Some more so than for others. But still sacrifice.

The coming of this joy is not easy.

Paul describes it as "labor pains":

*the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains* (Rom.8:22 NRSV)

But then the author of Hebrews reminds us of Jesus,

*who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross.* (Hebrews 12:2 NRSV)

The joy does not come easily. The new birth does not come easily.

And it does not come without cost to me. I may need to change some things about me and my life: expectations, ways of doing things. I may need to give up some things about my life, perhaps even my life.

Do I really want this joy, this newness, this kingdom as much as I thought I did?

So we yearn for this joy, this new creation.

Though sometimes we wonder how much we really want it.

And certainly we experience how much this newness is resisted.

And in the midst of the turmoil, in the midst of the struggle, in the midst of this conflict, Now what?

And Paul writes to a community that may very well have been wrestling with similar questions; writes to a community that lived in full expectation of the coming of that kingdom.

Yet some were living idly, not doing any work; maybe thinking, "Let God take care of it, and I don't need to do anything."

But Paul says, "No! Carry on! I gave you an example to imitate." To which he concludes, "Do not weary in doing what is right."

There it is: the answer to the question "Now what?" Even in the midst of the turmoil of Thessalonica and that community, even in the midst of our own turmoil, "Do not weary in doing what is right."

In the midst of our own groaning with our own travail; in the midst of our own yearning for the kingdom and wondering how much we really want it; in the midst of our own cries, "How long, O Lord?", "Do not weary in doing what is right." For, as the prophet Habakkuk reminds us, "*the righteous shall live by faith*" (Habakkuk 2:4).

In the midst of our trials and turmoil, even with each other; in the midst of our sacrifice, "Do not weary in doing what is right." For we are to be like Christ, "*who for the joy set before him endured the cross*"...and calls us to take up our own.

I may not know the exact make-up of this kingdom and new life that I yearn for. I may not know the sacrifice that will be asked of me. I may not know what will come tomorrow, whether it be joy or sorrow. But "Do not weary in doing what is right."

Do not weary in doing what is forgiving, even though all others hold a grudge.  
Do not weary in doing what is merciful, even though all others seek revenge.  
Do not weary in doing what is loving, even though all others hate and reject.  
Do not weary in doing what is kind, even though all others be vicious.  
Do not weary in doing what is good, even though all others revel in being bad.  
Do not weary in doing what is just, even though all others only worry about being caught.  
Do not weary in doing what is patient, even though all others demand it now.  
Do not weary in doing what is compassionate, even though all others only look out for themselves.

For, as Ernest Shurtleff, wrote,

**For not with swords' loud clashing,  
nor roll of stirring drums;  
with deeds of love and mercy  
the heavenly kingdom comes.**  
(“Lead On, O King Eternal,” 1888)

Do not weary.

And do not worry, but have faith. Trust in the God of righteousness, the God of forgiveness; trust the God of mercy and of love, the God of kindness and justice, the God of patience and compassion; trust the God of all good – all present good, and also the coming good.

For the promise is sure, the joy is certain, the kingdom will come – of that we can be sure.

But the fulfillment is not yet. The joy is definitely disturbed in our daily experience. The kingdom seems scattered and intermittent for now.

So what do we do now? What do we do in this interim between the coming of the kingdom and its fulfillment?

In the late 1800's, Robert E. Lee wrote to his son:

Nearly one hundred years ago, there was a day of remarkable gloom and darkness, still known as the Dark Day - a day when the light of the sun was slowly extinguished as if by an eclipse.

The Legislature of Connecticut was in session, and as the members saw the unexpected and unaccountable darkness coming on, they shared in the general awe and terror. It was supposed by many that the last day, the day of judgment, had come. Someone, in the consternation of the hour, moved an adjournment.

Then there arose an old Puritan legislator, Davenport Stanford, who said that if the last day had come he desired to be found at his post of duty, and therefore moved that candles be brought so that the House could proceed with its business.

So, my son, when in the conflict of life the cloud and the darkness come, stand unflinchingly by your post; remain faithful to the discharge of your duty.

(from Our American Heritage, ed. by Charles L. Wallis, 1970)

And “Do not weary in doing what is right.”

Trust the promise and presence of God.

And “Do not weary in doing what is right.” For the righteous shall live by faith. And we shall live in the certainty that God will redeem the world, in God's good time. And we shall live in the knowledge that God is with us even now.

So, “Do not weary in doing what is right.”

Do it often. Do it always.

“Do not weary in doing what is right.”

**\*HYMN** “Lead On, O King Eternal!” GtG 269

- 1. Lead on, O King eternal!**  
The day of march has come;  
henceforth in fields of conquest  
your tents shall be our home.  
Through days of preparation  
your grace has made us strong,  
and now, O King eternal,  
we lift our battle song.
- 2. Lead on, O King eternal,**  
till sin's fierce war shall cease,  
and holiness shall whisper  
the sweet amen of peace;

*(continued...)*



**for not with swords' loud clashing,  
nor roll of stirring drums;  
with deeds of love and mercy  
the heavenly kingdom comes.**

- 3. Lead on, O King eternal:  
we follow, not with fears,  
for gladness breaks like morning  
where'er your face appears;  
your cross is lifted o'er us;  
we journey in its light.  
The crown awaits the conquest;  
lead on, O God of might!**

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### **\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**In life and in death we belong to God.  
Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,  
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,  
whom alone we worship and serve.**

**In a broken and fearful world  
the Spirit gives us courage  
to pray without ceasing,  
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,  
to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,  
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,  
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.  
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)*

### **RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS**

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: God of grace...

All: ...grant us your mercy and your strength.

## THE LORD'S PRAYER *(Traditional)*

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.

## OFFERING

*Invitation*

*Reflection*

*\*Unison Prayer of Dedication*

Loving God,  
before we give to you, you have given to us.  
All we offer we have received from you.  
We thank you for your goodness,  
and we praise you for your bountiful works,  
Use these gifts, and us,  
to share your abundance and spread your love;  
through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## SENDING

\*CLOSING HYMN "Go to the World!" GtG 295

1. Go to the world!  
Go into all the earth.  
Go preach the cross where Christ renews life's worth,  
baptizing as the sign of our rebirth.  
Alleluia. Alleluia.

*(continued...)*

**2. Go to the world!**  
**Go into every place.**  
**Go live the word of God's redeeming grace.**  
**Go seek God's presence in each time and space.**  
**Alleluia. Alleluia.**

**3. Go to the world!**  
**Go struggle, bless, and pray;**  
**the nights of tears give way to joyous day.**  
**As servant church, you follow Christ's own way.**  
**Alleluia. Alleluia.**

**4. Go to the world!**  
**Go as the ones I send,**  
**for I am with you till the age shall end,**  
**when all the hosts of glory cry "Amen!"**  
**Alleluia. Alleluia.**

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**\*CHARGE AND BLESSING**

One:           ...And let the gathered people of God say...  
All:            ...Amen.

**\*RESPONSE "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me"**

**I'm gonna live so  
God can use me anywhere,  
Lord, anytime!  
I'm gonna live so  
God can use me anywhere,  
Lord, anytime!**

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**POSTLUDE**

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