Worship Plan for Mediated Joint Worship Services

Sunday, November 22, 2020

Christ the King Sunday

**GATHERING**

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

**Introduction**

Hello, welcome members and friends of the Nith Valley Ministry Area congregations to our mediated worship service for Sunday, November 22nd, Reign of Christ Sunday. Today is the last Sunday of our church year.

 As has been our tradition in our joint, mediated worship, today we will celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion. If you have not done so already, please take a moment now to gather some bread and wine or juice into your worship space at home. Today’s worship service is hosted by Zion Lutheran Church in Philipsburg. I am Pastor Leanne Darlington, and I will be preaching and presiding today. Our organist is Trevor Wagler, and our reader is Brenda Hoerle.

Once again, a warm welcome to all who have joined us for worship today. May you find spiritual strength and sustenance here for your week ahead. Let us take a moment to prepare your hearts and minds for worship.

**GREETING**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,

and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.

O God of power and might, your Son shows us the way of service, and in him we inherit the riches of your grace. Give us the wisdom to know what is right and the strength to serve the world you have made, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**GATHERING SONG*Crown Him with Many Crowns* (ELW 855)**

1 Crown him with many crowns,
the Lamb upon his throne;
hark, how the heav'nly anthem drowns
all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing
of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless king
through all eternity.

2 Crown him the virgin's Son,
the God incarnate born,
whose arm those crimson trophies won
which now his brow adorn;
fruit of the mystic rose,
yet of that rose the stem,
the root whence mercy ever flows,
the babe of Bethlehem.

3 Crown him the Lord of love--
behold his hands and side,
rich wounds, yet visible above,
in beauty glorified.
No angels in the sky
can fully bear that sight,
but downward bend their burning eyes
at mysteries so bright.

4 Crown him the Lord of life,
who triumphed o'er the grave
and rose victorious in the strife
for those he came to save.
His glories now we sing,
who died and rose on high,
who died, eternal life to bring,
and lives that death may die.

5 Crown him the Lord of years,
the potentate of time,
creator of the rolling spheres,
ineffably sublime.
All hail, Redeemer, hail!
For thou hast died for me;
thy praise and glory shall not fail
throughout eternity.

**WORD**

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

**FIRST READING: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24**

A reading from Ezekiel.

11Thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. 12As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. 13I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. 14I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 15I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. 16I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.
  20Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. 21Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, 22I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.
  23I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. 24And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.

**PSALM: Psalm 95:1-7a**

 1Come, let us sing to the Lord; let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.
 2Let us come before God’s presence with thanksgiving and raise a loud shout to the Lord with psalms.
 3For you, Lord, are a great God, and a great ruler above all gods.
 4In your hand are the caverns of the earth; the heights of the hills are also yours.
 5The sea is yours, for you made it, and your hands have molded the dry land.
 6Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our maker.
 7aFor the Lord is our God, and we are the people of God’s pasture and the sheep  of God’s hand.

**SECOND READING: Ephesians 1:15-23**

A reading from Ephesians.

15I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason 16I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. 17I 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, 18so 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, 19and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. 20God 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, 21far 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. 22And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, 23which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 25:31-46**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] 31“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. 32All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 34Then 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; 35for 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, 36I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ 37Then 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? 38And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ 40And 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.’ 41Then 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; 42for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43I 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.’ 44Then 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?’ 45Then 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.’ 46And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

**SERMON**

 Today is Christ the King Sunday, also known as Reign of Christ Sunday. It is also the last Sunday in Ordinary time of our Church year. Next week we begin a new church year and observe the beginning of Advent. Christ the King Sunday is a relatively new festival that was established in 1925 by Pope Pius XI. Pius made a connection between the increasing denial of Christ as King and the rising of secularism within European society. People were increasingly doubting Christ's power and existence, and the Church's power to sustain Christ's authority. In establishing this universal festival Pius hoped that the church would regain its power, that countries and world leaders would grow in faith and give respect and honour to Jesus Christ. Today, we celebrate the Reign of Christ by acknowledging the yet and not yet. That God’s reign has already been completed in the world and we wait with anticipation when the reign of God will be accomplished in the human hearts of all the world.

          Our gospel reading today from Matthew today, is entitled *The Judgement of the Nations* and it begins with this statement “When the Son of God comes in all his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory” (Matt. 25:1). Jesus is a king, but he is a different kind of king than we are accustomed to. When the Son of Man returns, he will not sit on the throne wearing a great robe and crown covered in jewels, like our vision of earthly kings. He does not exercise power and control; he will not live in a great palace surrounded by guards. When Jesus returns to sit on his throne of glory, we will be enlivened by humbleness and grace, knowing that the Son of Man desires love and empathy for all of humanity. He searches for and rescues humanity as a shepherd searches out and rescues his sheep that are lost and lonely, hungry, and naked. Yes, Jesus is a different kind of king.

         In these past few weeks for those of you who follow the revised common lectionary, we have learned about the end times and what it means to enter into the kingdom of heaven. We learned to stay awake and be alert for the return of Jesus Christ in the parable of the 10 bridesmaids. Last week we learned of God’s great love for us and the need to take a loving risk in accepting and sharing God’s abundance in our lives in the parable of the talents.  This week we hear what sounds to be words of judgement in the separating of the sheep from the goats, the right from the left. But I wonder if there is more to this passage. I wonder if there is also a message of mercy and hope in seeing the face of Christ in everyone around us, especially in those whom society has deemed othered or unworthy.

          I saw an interview several years ago on Breakfast Television with then host Kevin Frankish that opened my eyes to seeing the face of Christ in those around us.[[1]](#footnote-1) It was a cold and snowy morning and Kevin had stopped to get breakfast on his way to work. He met a man named Gord outside of Tim Hortons and started a conversation with him. Kevin ended up giving him his breakfast and he was so taken with Gord that he asked if Gord would share his story with the BT viewers at home. Gord happily obliged, excited for the opportunity to b on television and to give folks a glimpse into what homelessness looked like. Gord was a 57-year-old man who lived on the streets of Toronto, he looked much molder than his 57 years. He had struggled with severe mental issues for most of his life and used a wheelchair to get around because of severe arthritis. For many years he lived in what he called “ a special care home for the mentally ill.” There, his needs were met, he received his daily medications and had a warm place to lay his head each night. One day he was returning home for a hospital stay and noticed that he was being taken to a different location. He was dropped off at Seaton House, Toronto’s largest men’s homeless shelter, his home was being shut down, and there was no where else for him to go. Gord’s life changed shortly after that, as he did not feel safe in the shelter, so he left, and the streets of Toronto became his home. He spent most of his days at the library or on the TTC, anywhere he could find a safe place to sleep, anywhere he would not be asked to leave. He panhandled in hopes of getting enough money to be able to stay for a couple of hours at a fast-food restaurant during the night. Homeless folks cannot stay in a restaurant if they do not buy something, so Gord always hoped to collect enough change that he could buy a coffee every hour so he could at least stay warm and dry. At the time of the interview, he had lost his ID so he had no options for shelter, but he was working with a social services agency to get some new ID.

         Kevin then asked Gord how folks reacted to his presence on the street and his response was heartbreaking. For many years he thought that everyone was either deaf or spoke a foreign language because no one would ever respond to him, let alone look him in the eye. He was ignored and stated that he wished he were a puppy because folks would not ignore a puppy, folks would give a puppy a home. He went on to share a story about his wheelchair becoming stuck and frozen in the snow across the street from a Starbucks. He was stuck for 3 hours, trying to manoeuvre his wheelchair in the slush and the snow. Not one person stopped to give him a push, not one person asked if he needed help. This is the reality for homeless folks. This is the reality for the addicted, and the poor in our society. Do we see Christ in Gord? Do we see Christ in the addict who is looking for another high trying to forget the trauma in his life? Do we see Christ in the alcoholic begging for money so they can buy a six-pack to help them make it through the night? Or do we lay judgement upon them deeming them undeserving because of their lifestyle? Are we sheep or are we goats?

         Jesus appears to us in the every day of our lives, in the needs of those around us. David Lose states that “before we can **be Christ**, we need to **see Christ** in our neighbour.”[[2]](#footnote-2) We are called to see the face of Christ in those who are hungry, thirsty and naked, in those who are broken, in those who are forgotten by society.

         In Jesus Christ, we see God active in the flesh. The manifestation and presence of God in our lives does not need to be some grand mountain top experience. Remember that God showed up in the form of a tiny babe lying in a manger because there was no room for his family at the inn. God showed up on the cross when Jesus bowed his head and gave his last breath stating, “it is finished.” God shows up in the hurt, grief, and pain of our lives. God shows up in the loneliness and isolation of our lives, giving us hope for today and tomorrow.

          The parable of Jesus as the shepherd separating the sheep and the goats is an image designed to motivate God’s people to a life of discipleship and faithfulness; a life where we respond with genuine love and compassion for one another. We live out the Reign of Christ when we feed the hungry and clothe the naked. We live out the Reign of Christ when we treat folks like Gord with dignity and respect, knowing that he is a beloved child of God, that we are all beloved children of God who are worthy and loved, and deserve to have enough.

         Each of the churches in the NVMA plays a role in living out the Reign of Christ in their communities. There are dinners for the homeless, clothing and food drives, meal preparation, and the tying blankets to comfort folks and keep them warm, I could go on and on. Even in these times of pandemic, we are continuing to live out our roles of being Christ in the world by finding new ways to minister to those who need it most. The pandemic has provided the NVMA with new opportunities for worship and ministry together through a collaborative effort like our services that you watch each week. What if we worked together to further our efforts to be Christ in the world in our missions, in serving those who have the least, together? How much more of a difference could we make?

         I’m not sure what happened to Gord, but his conversation has stuck with me to this day. I hope that he was able to get off the streets and find permanent housing. Watching the interview that day, opened my eyes to what it means to be Christ in the world, to see the face of Christ in everyone that we meet. May we all do our part and have our eyes opened to the unconditional love of Jesus Christ through the eyes of those who need it the most. Amen

**HYMN OF THE DAY*O Christ, What Can It Mean for Us* (ELW 431)**

1 O Christ, what can it mean for us
to claim you as our king?
What royal face have you revealed
whose praise the church would sing?
Aspiring not to glory's height,
to power, wealth, and fame,
you walked a diff'rent, lowly way,
another's will your aim.

2 You came, the image of our God,
to heal and to forgive,
to shed your blood for sinners' sake
that we might rise and live.
To break the law of death you came,
the law of love to bring:
a diff'rent rule of righteousness,
a diff'rent kind of king.

3 Though some would make their greatness felt and lord it over all,
you said the first must be the last
and service be our call.
O Christ in workplace, church, and home, let none to power cling;
for still, through us, you come to serve,
a diff'rent kind of king.

4 You chose a humble human form
and shunned the world's renown;
you died for us upon a cross
with thorns your only crown.
But still, beyond the span of years,
our glad hosannas ring,
for now at God's right hand you reign,
a diff'rent kind of king!

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Longing for Christ’s reign to come among us, we pray for the outpouring of God’s power on the church, the world, and all in need. *A brief silence.*

Sovereign of all, train our ears to hear your cry in the needs of those around us. Bless all social ministries of the church through which we seek to serve others as we ourselves have been served. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You cause rain to fall on the just and unjust alike. Direct our use of creation to provide for the needs of all people in ways that are sustainable for the earth. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Bring peace to every place where conflict rages. Grant opportunities for ending divisions among us and usher in your reign of unity and reconciliation. Release us from systems of oppression and prejudice and heal divisions that surround us. Help us to see the face of Jesus in everyone we meet. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lay your healing hands on all who suffer in mind, body, or spirit. We pray for the countries of Columbia and Nicaragua as they deal with the aftermath of hurricanes Eta and Iota and the Philippines and Vietnam and the havoc caused by Typhoon Vamco. We remember all who are suffering from Covid 19, those who are sick, those who have died, those who grieve and all who treat and care for patients in hospitals and folks in LTC. We also remember those we name in the stillness of our hearts (pause). Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Pour out the gifts of your Spirit on children and youth throughout the church. Sustain those who work in children’s ministry, youth ministry, and campus ministry as they nurture the gifts of young people. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Thank you for saints now departed who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and tended to the sick. Inspire us by their example, that we may see your presence in those in need around us. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Receive our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever. **Amen.**

**MEAL**

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ

**Prayer for our Offerings**

Over the past week, we have received your offerings by mail, drop off, or online and so we give thanks for the many gifts we have received:

Almighty God, we worship today as a scattered church, yet we are one and we are blessed. Receive the gifts we bring in gratitude for your care for us, and help us to bless you with dedication of our lives; through Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**Blessing of Children**

(During blessing, show video/photo/avatar of children from various congregations)

God, we pray your blessing on the children of all ages whom you have entrusted to our care. Thank you for giving them to us to love and to teach your ways. Be with them, guard and protect them in these difficult times. Bless them in all their learnings, so they may grow closer to you, wherever they are this week: at home, with friends, resting, at play, with toys, screens, books, and crafts. In Jesus name we pray, **Amen.**

**Words of Institution**

On his last night, as he shared a meal with his friends,

our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;

broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,

and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood,

shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

**LORD’S PRAYER (ELW p. 112)**

 Though we are apart, we are made one in Christ Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit, and so we pray as one:

**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.**

**INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

There is a place for you at the banquet. Come and feast at Jesus’ table

**COMMUNION**

Let us eat together: the body of Christ, bread of heaven; and the blood of

Christ, cup of salvation.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Gracious God, in this meal you have gathered your scattered people, and set a banquet. Sustain us on the journey, strengthen us to care for the least of your beloved children, and give us glad and generous hearts as we meet you on the way.

**Amen.**

**SENDING**

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

**BLESSING**

May the God of all creation, in whose image we are made, who claims us and calls us beloved, who strengthens us for service, give you reason to rejoice and be glad! The blessing of God. Sovereign. +Saviour, and Spirit be with you today and always. **Amen.**

**DISMISSAL**

Beloved of God, go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The Peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

From sundaysandseasons.com. Copyright © 2020 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License number: #SB127894.

 Hymn texts and music are in public domain, except the following, reprinted by permission under OneLicense, license #A-736514.

**Oh Christ, What Can it Mean for Us-** Text © 2001 GIA Publications, Inc., 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638. www.giamusic.com. 800.442.3358. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Permission to stream copyrighted music in this service is obtained from OneLicense, license #A-736514.

1. Kevin Frankish, “Candid Chat with homeless man Gord,” on Breakfast Television, accessed November 17, 2020,

 <https://www.bttoronto.ca/videos/4714710979001/?platform=hootsuite>.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. David Lose, “Sheep and Goats and Judgement, Oh My” in Dear Working Preacher, accessed November 17, 2020, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/dear-working-preacher/sheep-and-goats-and-judgment-oh-my>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)