

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2021
CHRIST THE KING / 26TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Due to copyright limitations, we are unable to print the words to the songs. However, our musicians have chosen music to fit the scriptures. We invite you to look up the words in your worship book and ponder them. If you do not have a worship book, ponder the words to one of your favourite hymns and listen for God's voice. Those who have internet may find the songs on YouTube.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.

~John C. Maxwell

BEFORE WE WORSHIP, WE REFLECT...

In fairy tales, kings live in a castle, usually located on a hill (a safe place), surrounded by a moat for the utmost protection for the king and family. Modern political leaders often have more technologically advanced means to provide a similar level of safety against would-be attackers. Because of these preconceived notions of what kings are, we need to be reminded that Jesus redefined the title "king." The appointed psalm says, "The waters have lifted up, O LORD, . . . the waters have lifted up their pounding waves. Mightier than the sound of many waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea, mightier is the LORD who dwells on high" (Ps. 93:3-4). While a king might have the ability to sail atop a roaring, chaotic sea, Christ the King is one who stills the waves (Mark 4:35-41).

In John's gospel for today, Jesus says "For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth" (John 18:37). Perhaps the 'this' Jesus is referring to is a motioning with his hands to the cross, the clearest demonstration of God's love for humanity and the truest definition of kingship. Jesus redefines what power is and what people think God's power looks like to fight evil and suffering in the world. Jesus does not resist the way of the cross with force.

Rather than protecting himself from harm in any way, the vulnerable King Jesus dares to demonstrate God's love for all people. Jesus does not run from pain, anguish, or suffering. Rather, the risen Jesus, "the ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5), rushes to the places of disaster and suffering in the world. Jesus goes where storms are ravaging and have ravaged lives and brings life and calm into the chaos.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come to worship Jesus Christ, Alpha and Omega, the one who is, who was, and is to come.

We come to worship the one who rules justly.

Come to worship Jesus Christ, the faithful witness the firstborn of the dead, the ruler of the kings of the earth!

Bread of Heaven, God with us!

Good Shepherd, True Vine!

Eternal Word, great I AM.

Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace!

We come to worship Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords! To him be glory and dominion forever and ever! Amen.

CHILDREN'S SONG WOV 744 *Soon And Very soon*

CENTERING PRAYER

Almighty and ever-living God, you anointed your beloved Son to be priest and sovereign forever. Grant that all the people of the earth, now divided by the power of sin, may be united by the glorious and gentle rule of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

A NEW CREED

We are not alone; we live in God's world.

We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence, to live with respect in Creation, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN'S CHAT

One of the games we used to play in class when I was in elementary school was, "Guess Who?" One person stood in the center of a circle of students. They were allowed to look at everyone before a blindfold was placed over their eyes. The teacher then selected one person who left the circle and stood out in the hall until the end of the round. Once the student had left the room, the blindfold was removed. Then, the student in the middle of the circle had to guess who was missing!

Sometimes, to make it harder, the teacher would have the rest of the students change places before the person in the center opened their eyes! You might think it would be easy to guess who was missing. I can tell you from experience that it was harder than you think!

Suppose Jesus was in your class. Do you think you would miss him if he was the one asked to wait in the hall? I am asking a tough question! Let me make it even harder! Rather than thinking about Jesus being the one to leave the room, how about looking for the Spirit of Jesus in each person! What is it about each person that shows the love of God in their words and actions? Sometimes it is harder to tell when Jesus is present! You have to pay close attention! My sisters and I knew someone who seemed grumpy when around people, yet when he was around animals, he was the nicest, gentlest person ever!

People have always interested me. I could watch people for hours! I learn so much. Mostly I learn that just when I think I know someone, they surprise me! The surprise can be good, or not so good. Always, I remind myself to look for Jesus in each person. I also remind myself that people are looking to see Jesus in me.

MINUTE FOR MISSION

A Second Chance

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, one in five Canadians experience mental health problems. Your Mission & Service gifts help.

In his own words, Chance shares how the mental health support he received through the Bissell Centre—an organization supported through your Mission & Service gifts—helped him change his life.

"My name is Chance. I'm 25 years old and live at Hope Terrace, a permanent supportive home that is run by the Bissell Centre. I have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder—a type of brain injury with no cure—so I need help with things like coping with my emotions, keeping appointments, and cooking.

"Before I moved into the Hope Terrace residence, life was frustrating and stressful. I used to live at my grandmother's house, along with my mom and four other family members. When everyone was home it was chaos, which made it even harder to manage my emotions—even happy emotions were too much at times.

"Mom and I knew I needed help, but we didn't have money and we didn't know where to start. So, a few years ago, I tagged along with my friend to Bissell Centre's Easter meal. He was getting help from Bissell and seemed to like it enough. Maybe I could get help too?

"It was at that very meal that I first heard about Bissell's mental health resources and the Hope Terrace house.

“When I was invited to move into Hope Terrace a few months later, Mom and I both agreed it would be a good decision. I finally felt some hope. Maybe life doesn’t have to be so hard all the time? Maybe I could have a better life?”

“The staff here help me with the things that overwhelm me most—like budgeting, cooking, and dealing with my emotions. They are awesome! They’re really good, kind people—they’re my family.

“Without the support that I regularly get here, I don’t know where I’d be.”

Thank you for your generosity through Mission & Service.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

May these words of scripture give us new sight, new vision. May we see newly the abundance of our lives and the opportunities we have to share with our neighbours. Amen.

READINGS AND PSALM

First Reading: Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

To the community for whom this passage was written, it seemed as though the oppression they were experiencing would never end. Daniel’s message is: It shall end. The Ancient One, who is judge, will call all nations to account and will give dominion to “one like a human being,” the Messiah.

⁹As I watched, thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One took his throne,
his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire.

¹⁰A stream of fire issued and flowed out from his presence.

A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him.

The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.

¹³As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven.
And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him.

¹⁴To him was given dominion and glory and kingship,
that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away,
and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.

Psalm 93

R: Ever since the world began, your throne has been established. (Ps. 93:2)

¹The LORD is king, robed in majesty; the LORD is robed in majesty and armed with strength.
The LORD has made the world so sure that it cannot be moved.

²Ever since the world began, your throne has been established; you are from everlasting. R

³The waters have lifted up, O LORD, the waters have lifted up their voice;
the waters have lifted up their pounding waves.

**⁴Mightier than the sound of many waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea,
mightier is the LORD who dwells on high.**

⁵Your testimonies are very sure, and holiness befits your house, O LORD, forever and forevermore. **R**

Second Reading: Revelation 1:4b-8

The book of Revelation begins by celebrating the Almighty God, who spans all of time. Similarly, Jesus is celebrated as the firstborn from the dead who rules over the world’s rulers. He is the one whose return we eagerly await.

^{4b}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, ⁵and 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, ⁶and made us to be a kingdom,

priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

⁷Look! 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.

Gospel: John 18:33-37

In John's gospel, the story of Jesus and Pilate presents two different ways of exercising power: through force or with love.

³³Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" ³⁴Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" ³⁵Pilate 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?" ³⁶Jesus 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 Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." ³⁷Pilate 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."

SERMON:

Canada is part of the British Commonwealth. We have a queen, and yet, we do not have a queen. Royalty are people Canadians watch on television, read about in the paper, follow on the internet. There are those in Canada who have actually met the queen. Still, it was a moment in time. In Canada, we really do not have a mindset for royalty. They are "over there", in Britain.

This makes the conversation between Jesus and Pilate difficult to follow. The power and authority of the queen today is not nearly what it was for a king in Jesus' day.

I looked up the current authority and role of Queen Elizabeth II in Canada. Britain's Queen Elizabeth remains the nation's head of state, although we are an independent country. Under the constitution, The Queen is the source of executive authority and the Command-in-Chief of the Canadian Forces as well as being a part of Parliament. The Queen does not play an active role in Canadian politics and her powers are mostly symbolic.

Knowing that kings of antiquity had a very different authority, and since Rome was an occupying nation, why is Pilate concerned about whether or not Jesus is a king?

At this time, Romans knew of a number of people who had been identified as divine, as gods, and all of them had been kings of one kind or another. In this light, Pilate's question was only natural given the charges Jesus faced. Not only that, the Roman emperors declared themselves divine.

Pilate's question "Are you the king of the Jews?" comes from a religious motive. Pilate was daily reminded that any human of divine status was also a king. The two notions could not be separated in Roman minds. Whether the question was respectful or sarcastic, we will never know. It is clear that divinity and kingship went together in Pilate's mind. When he later placed a plaque on the cross saying this was the "King of the Jews", the gospel writer would have seen it as a proclamation of Jesus' divinity.

This is the last Sunday in the Church year. Next Sunday is the first Sunday in Advent, a whole new year for the Church. On this last Sunday of the Church year, we acknowledge the power and peace that is Christ, the Son of God, who has authority over life and death. On this last Sunday of the Church year, we focus on the cross, the place where God meets creation. On this Sunday of Christ the King

we look at Jesus' ministry, the living out of his power through humility, compassion, boundless love and forgiveness. We contrast it with the Roman understanding of power – gained through violence, oppression and fear. On this Sunday, we declare our allegiance. Do we stand with Christ, or not?

There is another question Pilate asks Jesus, which the lectionary has chosen not to include. "What is truth?" Sadly, Pilate leaves Jesus' presence before Jesus can answer the question.

Pastor David Lose, senior pastor at Mount Olivet Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, was conversing with a colleague on this text. As a long-time interpreter of scripture, David thought he had nailed down this text over the years. Then along came his colleague who turned this text, and his interpretive world, on its head. He paraphrases her words:

Jesus has come to witness to the truth, the truth that God is love (John 3:16), and that because we have not seen God and have such a hard time imagining God (John 1:18), all too often our imaginations are dominated by our experience. So rather than imagining that God is love, we imagine God to be violent because we live in a world of violence. Rather than recognize the cross as a symbol of sacrificial love, we assume it's the legal mechanism of punishing Jesus in our stead because we have way too much experience with punitive relationships. Rather than believe that God's grace and acceptance are absolutely unconditional, we assume God offers love, power, and status only on the condition that we fear, obey, and praise God – and despise those who don't – because so much of our life is quid pro quo.

But Jesus is not of this world. And therefore his followers will not fight for him because to bring the kingdom about by violence is to violate the very principles of this kingdom and cause its destruction.¹

Amen, sister!

Violence. It doesn't matter how many times one says it, there are many who do not seem to hear that violence does not solve anything, it only creates more violence. We have witnessed this in our own province this past while. We have watched the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban; we have seen tensions escalate between law enforcement and the black community. We hear in the news of the abuses of the Church against the people of God, largely children, by clergy who have sworn to be faithful to Christ, and the hierarchy who protected them. For the record, it isn't just the Catholic church who needs to repent! We observe the anger and, yes, hatred, of the white culture against the indigenous peoples of Canada, refugees, anyone who isn't "us".

Jesus said to Pilate, "Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Sometimes that is easier said than done. We just have to look at families who have been torn apart over the vaccination issue to know that standing up for Jesus can lead to equal separation and despair.

God, is there no hope at all?!

Yes, absolutely there is hope! Our hope is rooted in love. You have heard this before. Only now, you have to live it like you have never lived it before. Sometimes, living out love means to be shown how we are not so loving as we thought we were. Sometimes, living out love means confronting a family feud, embracing the prodigal, acknowledging our anger and walking through it to healing. Sometimes, living out the love means hitting the knees and confessing to God that we are tired, lost and just don't want to love so deeply anymore. Unconditional love is work. Unconditional love is illogical. Unconditional love holds a mirror up to ourselves. Who wants that?

Ah, there's the rub! Our allegiance to Christ isn't about us. Our allegiance to Christ isn't about our wants. Our allegiance to Christ is always about Christ and following the voice of truth. Our allegiance

¹ <http://www.davidlose.net/2015/11/christ-the-king-b-not-of-this-world/>

to Christ isn't about success, it is about faithfulness. It isn't about being perfect. It is about being honest.

In one of my former parishes, I had a church member who was angry at me. She said she came to church to feel good, to be uplifted, not to leave feeling 'confronted'. I thanked her for her honesty and the fact that she had approached me directly about her feelings. I also told her that if all I ever did was preach so that she could leave worship feeling happy, then I was not being faithful to my calling. The Gospel is a call to change. Change is hard work. Change can be painful. Just look at the disciples. Their time with Jesus was not a walk in the park. AND, in the end, they became the foundation, the hope, the love, the acceptance that people needed to reconnect with God in a new way. The disciples went through a refiner's fire and came out the stronger for it. They are the reason the Church, the body of Christ exists. The Holy Spirit keeps calling us and inspiring us and we, the body of Christ, are still here. Oh yes, hope exists!

"Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

May it be so, Lord Jesus. Amen.

HYMN OF THE MONTH MV 126 Are You A Shepherd?

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Eternal God, you hold firm amid the changes of this world. Hear us now as we pray for the church, the world, and everyone in need.

God, you sent your Son Jesus to testify to the truth. We pray for preachers, missionaries, evangelists, and teachers who carry your forgiveness and love to the world. Fill their words and actions with compassion and kindness so that your truth will shine.

God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

God, you sent your Son Jesus to liberate all of creation. We pray for all living things longing for the freedom to flourish, from ancient trees and wild grasses to endangered animals and rare insects. Give human beings compassionate hearts to care for them.

God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

God, you sent your Son Jesus to lead us into the way of peace. Direct the members of international alliances in choosing a nonviolent path toward the future. Give them the humility and wisdom to make just decisions to benefit all.

God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

God, you sent your Son Jesus to make us into your own people, set free to serve you. We pray for people who serve the well-being of others, especially ministries in our community - the Red River Valley Food Bank, the Red River Valley Refugee Sponsorship Committee, Youth for Christ, support groups. Renew them in their work.

God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

God, you sent your Son Jesus to rule in all times and places. We pray for the friends of our congregation who are unable to join our worship in person and for all who are sick and suffering: Pastor Norris Nordin, Dwayne, Carolyn & Douglas. Tracy Skoglund, Kathryn [Janke] Schmidt, Brooke Alexiuk, John & Erica Sommer, Mike Froese. Join their prayers with ours and unite them with us in the body of Christ.

God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

God, you sent your Son Jesus to be our beginning and our ending. Grant comfort to the family of David Buhler as they grieve his loss. We give thanks for those whose lives have given us a glimpse of Jesus' reign of justice and peace. Empower us to join their witness. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God our hope and strength, we entrust to you all for whom we pray. Remain with us always, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

SENDING SONG VU 235 *O Worship The King*

BENEDICTION

God, the beginning and the end, who has written your name in the book of life, ✠ bless and keep you in grace and peace from this time forth and forevermore.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Led on by the saints before us, go in peace to serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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