

Christ the King Sunday, 10:30am

Word for the Week: "Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn." Isaiah 60:3 (NRSV)

Worship Info:

- (Per Conference instructions) **Worship will be online only through December 13th**; further determinations will be made regarding Christmas.

- Attached are the week's **worship** package and info on how to join us online.

-- Join via **Zoom**, by clicking on this link, or copy and paste it in your browser:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86233774377?pwd=cmF5NkRBVmNqdEEveTBoRTRZbmppdz09>

--- Enter the following as prompted: **Meeting ID:** 862 3377 4377 **Password:** 029381

-- Join **by phone** at (312) 626-6799 (Chicago), using the same info (charges may apply).

-- Or watch on **Youtube Live** at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCleukD6raE5lms732qpdDUA>

--- Go to the linked page, wait for a "Live Now" video, click the play button!

-- **Share these links** with family and friends! **Visit our Web page & Facebook page!**

-- Please **contact Pastor Kevin** at (217) 692-2543 if you need help connecting.

Announcements:

Liturgist, Slide 1

- Good Morning! Thank you worshiping for with us today! And,

-- Happy Thanksgiving later this week – no matter how you are celebrating, we have much to be thankful for!

-- Please enjoy this morning's Prelude, performed by Gregg Eckols.

Prelude

Pianist

Bell Ringer

Live or? Slide 2

Greeting

Pastor, Slide 3

Good Morning Blue Mound! Welcome to Christ the King Sunday! It is also the last Sunday of the Christmas calendar – next week we begin the new year with the First Sunday of Advent, an Advent like no other... For those who haven't heard, the Bishop has instructed all IGRC churches not to meet through December 13th, meaning most of Advent will be online.

A determination regarding Christmas Eve will be made on December 9th. So Christmas may be a little different as well. The good news is that work is underway on our heating system so it should be warm when we gather once again! One way or another, let's begin with our:

*** Collect Prayer**

(please rise in spirit)

Pastor, Slide 4

Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Pastor: ²⁰ **Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep.**

Liturgist: ²¹ Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, ²² I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

Pastor: ²³ **I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.**

Liturgist: ²⁴ And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

Pastor: **The story of God's people for God's people.**

All: **Thanks be to God. Amen.**

L: *Please rise in spirit and join your voice in affirming our faith through the words of the:*

***Affirmation of Faith:**

Apostles' Creed

Liturgist, Slide 15-16

Liturgist: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Passing of the Peace

Pastor, Slide 17

Pastor: *You may stand if you'd like, but please stay in your seats.* In this time of peace, I offer words of Psalm 29:10-11, "¹⁰ The Lord rules over the floodwaters. The Lord reigns as king forever. ¹¹ The Lord gives his people strength. The Lord blesses them with peace." Peace to you all.

All: **Peace to you as well.**

Moment of Insight

"Far and Above" Ephesians 1:15-23

Pastor, Slide 18

And so, following our time of peace, perhaps it is time to consider hope. *Hope* can be a hard word these days. With all that has happened this year, and all that remains in motion, what is the use of hoping? I mean, after all this, we still don't know what lies ahead. We can hope for better days, but what does that really mean? We can hope that our politicians will work together again, seeking the greater good for all of our nation's citizens, but there aren't many signs of that happening soon. We can hope that someday this virus will go away, but when? Soon, we hope, but when is truly a mystery right now – someday, perhaps...

But someday really isn't all that helpful, is it? Helpful or hopeful. It's not that we don't like mysteries, but *someday* is not, in itself, sufficient to get us through *this* day and time. I mean, we've just been instructed to stop worshiping in-person through most of Advent – we may not be able to worship together on Christmas Eve. Where is the hope in that? And yet, I feel as

though we would fail, as a church and a people, if we took that news and shouted to the world that, “They took Christmas away from us!!” We know better than that. Paul reminds us why in today’s reading from Ephesians.

Paul knows well the deep presence of mystery in our life with God. But he, too, is uninterested in simply living in the mystery or locating hope in a “someday” realm. Instead, he prays quite specifically for his friends to be illuminated here and now, praying that God will give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation as they come to know God. He prays that the eyes of their hearts will be enlightened. *So that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power (18-19, NRSV).*

Paul is talking about a knowing that is tied with resurrection. He is talking about a hope that is bound together with the life of the risen Christ. *God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead*, Paul writes in verse 20. Paul makes clear that Christ, in turn, is putting his power to work in us, and not just for someday, but also for now: that this hope is active in our lives as we press into the mystery around us.

Even as Paul writes about the risen Christ being seated in the heavenly places, he also bears witness to a Christ who wore our flesh and abides with us still, hoping for us when our hope is shattered, breathing new life into us, encompassing us in the arms of a community that holds us with hope.

Hope is not always comforting or comfortable. Hope asks us to open ourselves to what we do not know, to pray for illumination in this life, to imagine what is beyond our imagining, to bear what seems unbearable. It calls us to keep breathing through hard times, to turn toward one another when we might prefer to turn away. Hope rises far and above “someday.” It draws our eyes and hearts toward a more whole future, yes, but it also propels us also into the present, where Christ waits for us to work with him toward a more whole world now.¹ Nobody is taking away Christmas, nobody is closing the church – Not when we place our hope in the Lord. Amen.

Scripture Reading

Matthew 25:31-46

Slide 19

L: This morning’s scripture reading is from Matthew 25:31-46, in which Jesus tells the parable of the sheep and the goats. I’ll read from the NRSV.

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. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³ and he will put the

¹ Adapted from work by Jan Richardson, located at: <http://paintedprayerbook.com/2014/11/19/so-that-you-may-know-the-hope/#.VGzLvN7vZUM>

sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴ Then 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; ³⁵ for 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, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' ³⁷ Then 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? ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' ⁴⁰ And 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.' ⁴¹ Then 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; ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I 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.' ⁴⁴ Then 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?' ⁴⁵ Then 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.' ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Liturgist: The words of Jesus for God's people.

All: Praise be to God.

Message:

"Wait, When...?"

Pastor, Slide 19

As I begin this morning's message, please join me in prayer: Lord God, Pour out your Spirit on the words I am about to share, make them your own, find them pleasing, I pray, that they may nourish Your people, O LORD, our rock and our redeemer. Amen

Page 1 - The Issue Today/Intro Story:

Have you ever run into someone while out at a store or somewhere, and they seem to know you quite well? But you can't quite place where they might know you from? Dorothy and I were out one time before moving up here and had such an experience. What do you do? Well, we chatted for a while, hoping the light would come on, but it never did. Eventually the moment passed, and we went our separate ways, and once the person was a safe distance away we asked each other who was that. Neither of us knew. Perhaps, instead of playing along we should have stopped everything, and said, "Wait, when - did we meet? Where do we know you from?"

Maybe things like that don't happen when you've lived in the same area for a long time, and you know pretty much everyone because you know everyone. But when you spend 20

years bumping around in the Air Force, you meet a lot of different folks in a lot of different places, and sometimes you meet them again the second time around.

I'll never forget, I was sent to the Azores the first time on an unaccompanied tour. Dorothy, who was 4 months pregnant, and Sarah stayed behind in California. At some time during that tour a couple of friends and I were invited to another friend's home for dinner. I don't remember what all was served, but I do remember Macaroni and Cheese being on the menu – I remember that because I also remember that the lady of the house liked to put mustard on her Mac and Cheese. Now, being from Minnesota, I put ketchup on mine – we put ketchup on everything up there, but mustard? That was pretty memorable!

Fast forward several years, the whole family is back in the Azores, and Dorothy is invited to someone's home for a Women of the Chapel meeting or something. The home happened to be that of the same couple I had dinner with all those years ago – they had also moved and found themselves back at the same time we were there! When I heard where she was going, I recognized the name, and asked Dorothy to ask her hostess, if she still liked mustard on her macaroni and cheese.

She did, and she did. But the look on her face must have said, "Wait, when..., how... could you possibly know that?" I wish I could have been there to see it. I wonder what sorts of things I'll remember about all of you, on down the road.

Page 2 - Exploring the Text/Context:

So, now that I've been preaching for a while, I'm always amazed by what I have and haven't preached on yet. I don't remember each and every sermon – obviously, I don't memorize them. So when I searched through my records, I was surprised to find that I didn't preach at all the last time this scripture came up. We must have gone somewhere for thanksgiving that year. I may not have selected this reading as my subject anyway – I try to avoid the too familiar, and the reading from Ezekiel is pretty intriguing stuff, its words leading one toward Psalm 23. "¹⁵ I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD."

It's Christ the King Sunday, the end of the Christian Calendar year. Next week we start anew with the hope of Christ's coming – as a child, yes, but also as King. Today we celebrate the King!

Today "the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, [and] he will sit upon his glorious throne. [With] all the nations...gathered in his presence... (v31-32, NRSV). But this isn't just some coronation celebration, a ceremonial trip to the throne. The king has arrived to take care of some business! This isn't just any day; this is **the** day. The day that "... [The King] will separate [the people] from each other, just as a shepherd separates the sheep

from the goats. ³³ ...[Putting] the sheep on his right side. [and] the goats ... on his left (v32-33, NLT).

We know this story, most of us have heard it several times over the course of our lives. We've read it during our Bible reading plans, our devotions, Sunday School classes over the years, and in sermons – many sermons I'm guessing. That's probably why I took this Sunday off three years ago – so I wouldn't have to preach on this oft heard story. But this is a story that needs to be heard – again – and even if I don't achieve every preacher's dream of finding a new angle to preach from, I pray that you'll hear something new in what I have to say. (Before you turn your camera off and sneak to the kitchen for another cup of coffee...)

We know how the story goes. “the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you that 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 something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ ³⁷ Then 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? ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ ⁴⁰ And 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.’ (v34-40, CEB, paraphrased)

Then the King says to those on the left – hey, you know all that stuff these folks over here did for me? Yeah, you didn't do any of it. And their response was, “Wait. When didn't we do all of that? More importantly, when did we see **you** hungry, thirsty, naked (surely we would have done something if we had seen you naked!!!), sick or in prison? To which the King responds, ⁴¹ ...‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels’ – “you will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (v41 and 46).

Page 3 - The Text Today/Exegesis:²

Yes, we know that story! And from the first time we heard it in Sunday School all those years ago, we hoped and prayed that we would be in the group on the right, but lived scared to death that we might be a goat. That we might be condemned to eternal punishment. For many years I was so worried about the sorting and where I might end up that I'm not even sure I heard the real lesson of the story – the idea that we would be sorted according to how we treated others. The idea that we had a choice in the matter... There are blessings in this story – many blessings.

² This section and the next modified from work found at: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/there-is-now/reign-of-christ-thanksgiving-sunday-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/reign-of-christ-thanksgiving-sunday-year-a-preaching-notes>

One blessing is the question that is asked of the Lord in glory. Did you notice it? You probably noticed it from the goats. We'd expect goats to ask such a question. They are goats, after all. Jesus tells them what they didn't do, how they neglected him in his time of great need—when he was hungry, when he was thirsty. They didn't help; they didn't offer; they didn't pitch in or show up. But they ask, "When was it that we saw you and didn't help?" The implication being that had they known it was going to be on the test, they would have studied. Had they known those needy ones were important, they would have jumped up to help out.

Of course, we expect such goat-ish behavior from the goats. But then, hang on a minute. Didn't their question sound familiar by the time we got to it? Hadn't it been asked before? It was baa-ed by the sheep, even before the goats were confronted. Really? The sheep didn't know either? "When was it that we saw you ...?" What was it? Tell us. We must have missed it; we must have missed it in our busyness to help. In our attention to the job at hand, we didn't realize the gravity of the moment. We thought we were just helping. We thought we were just serving. We didn't realize that we were worshiping too.

There are those who don't like this story. They are afraid that it might lead to works righteousness, which means it might give us the idea that we can **earn** our place in the kingdom we long for. If we do good works, if we labor long and hard, then God will reward us and give us entry into the gates of heaven. And you have to agree, it does sound like that – my response about having a choice puts us close to that.

But, there are those who go to great lengths to tell us that we can't earn our salvation; that it comes as a gift from God, by grace through faith. And that any sense that we can pile up enough good works to earn it is not just misguided, it is dangerous; it is heresy. It is a dangerous mode of thinking that says my fate is in my hands; when in fact, it is always in God's hands. And God's hands are big enough to, well, hold the whole world in those hands - remember? We can trust in that.

Page 4 - The Good News/Summary/Takeaways:

So, do we nod and wink at Matthew's story as somehow misguided? Or as a mystery beyond our understanding? Because it sounds like works righteousness. Well, it would sound like that, if it weren't for those questions. "When was it that we saw you? When was it that we were helping you? When was it that you were present in a difficult moment of caring or a joyous moment of thanksgiving? When was it?"

Those questions are what keeps this story from being about earning our way into God's kingdom. Because evidently the sheep weren't doing what they were doing in order to get into heaven. They were doing it because they learned to love - somewhere. They learned to care - somewhere. They learned to give and love and serve - somewhere. They were doing it, in

other words, because they were already a part of the kingdom. They were doing it as a response to salvation, not a means to earn it or be worthy of it.

When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, he gave two. Love God and love neighbor. You can't, Jesus says, separate them. You can't love God and not love neighbor; it just doesn't work that way. Grace received must be grace shared; that's what makes it grace. Jesus was saying to the sheep, "You have shown that you received grace because you lived it out in your everyday life." So, welcome home. Welcome to the glory.

When was it? His answer was "whenever." Whenever you did it to them, you did it to me. Whenever you loved, you loved me. Whenever you cared, you cared for me. When it was easy and good, it was easy and good with me. When it was hard and painful, it was hard and painful with me. When was it? Whenever. He is there. His glory is there.

Even through pandemics and politics, when you reach out with love to someone who is hurting, you reach out to Jesus, whether you are aware of it or not. And during this season, wearing a mask is a sign of your love for others - as is following health guidelines and closures. Even in the face of all this, we have much to be thankful for. Even as we sit here mourning our lousy internet service, even as we miss hearing live music and singing out the hymns we have so much. Reach out in love and touch the hand of God. Amen.

At the conclusion of the message:

Liturgist: As you listen to this morning's offertory, reflect on the worshipful act of giving back to our Lord. Think about what you have received as blessings, and how you can bless others in return. Amen

Stewardship Moment: Please continue to support our mission by mailing your tithes and offerings to the church (PO Box 375, Blue Mound, IL 62513). Thank you.

Offertory

Slide 20

Doxology/Offertory Prayer:

Slide 21

Generous God, your good gifts to us are too many to name! We have been so blessed, not so that we might hide away these blessings, but to use them so that the blessings might be multiplied. As we give from our blessing stockpile, help it to multiply and grow. May our gifts empower multiple acts of mercy and compassion, and may your love pour over this world like a flood. If we have buried these gracious blessing, may today be the day we dig them up and put them to work, so that we might be seen as your faithful servants! Amen. (Matthew 25:14-30)

Joys and Concerns:

Slide 22

(Please forward joys and concerns to Pastor via Zoom Chat function, by phone at 692-2543, or at kdkriesel@gmail.com.)

Prayer Hymn:

"His Name is Wonderful", UMH 174

Slide 23-24

Pastoral Prayer

Slide 25

Shepherd of Israel, hear our prayer as your Son heard the plea of the criminal crucified with him. Gather into Christ's holy reign the broken, those who sorrow, and the sinner, that all may know wholeness, joy, and forgiveness.

You raised up your Son, O God, and seated him at your right hand as the shepherd and king who seeks what is lost, binds up what is wounded, and strengthens the weak. Empowered by the Spirit, grant that we may share with others that which we have received from your hand, to the honor of Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us be light in this time of trial.

As the shepherd who cares for the flock, O God, you guide all things through Jesus whom you have exalted over all creation as king. Hear the prayers we offer in his name for the creation he cherished and that you entrust to us, as with joy we lift up: _____ and with concern: _____,

Joys:

Concerns:

Continuing: Tara Jaukkuri (Surgery on her neck), Dorothy Kriesel (Recovery after Surgery), Brian Damery (Heart Issues), John Holmgren (Heart Issues), Wildfire Victims; Tropical Storm/Hurricane Victims, Dorothy Damery (Health); Maurine Severns (Eyes), Peace and Justice in our Nation; All affected by COVID 19; Carol Acree, Diane Elder, Doris Bonn, Tom Vaughn, Vic Oxby, Don Younker, Bob Perona, Our Government, Local, State, and National Leaders; First Responders, Members of the Military, Our Bishop (Frank Beard), Our District Superintendent (Brad Watkins), The United Methodist Church.

Those Unable to Join us in Worship: Dorothy Damery (Primrose), Doris Bonn (At Home), Martha Sheppard (Imboden Creek Gardens), Gene Grandfield (At Home), Eleanor Moma (At Home).

As we have proclaimed our joys and concerns let us now take to the Lord those things, which we wish to keep between God and ourselves in a time of silent prayer.

(Silent Prayer)

Look upon your people who rejoice in your justice and mercy, and grant that the prayers we make may reveal Christ's reign in our time, as we pray the words you taught us to pray:

LORD'S PRAYER:

Slide 25

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. Amen.

***Hymn of Commitment "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come" UMH 694 Slide 26-28**

Benediction - Closing Hymn - Postlude - Community Time

Slide 29