

## Christ the King Sunday

### **Psalm 100**

Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands; \*  
serve the Lord with gladness  
and come before his presence with a song.  
Know this: The Lord himself is God; \*  
he himself has made us, and we are his;  
we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.  
Enter his gates with thanksgiving;  
go into his courts with praise; \*  
give thanks to him and call upon his Name.  
For the Lord is good;  
his mercy is everlasting; \*  
and his faithfulness endures from age to age.

### **Ephesians 1:15-23**

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

### **Matthew 25:31-46**

Jesus said, "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. 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, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 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; 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, 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.' 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? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in

prison and visited you?’ 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.’ 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; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 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.’ 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?’ 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.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” As our lectionary year with Matthew comes to an end we await the coming of God’s Kingdom, a time when the hungry will be fed, the thirsty will be given something to drink, the stranger will be welcomed, the naked will be clothed, the sick will be taken care of and the prisoner will be visited, but we also usher in that Kingdom through connection with God and one another.

### **Sermon by Rev. Duncan A. Burns**

Jesus was the fulfillment of a deep longing for unity with God and our neighbor. This thread runs throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. “The LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations” (Psalm 100).

“Have your heart right with Christ, and he will visit you often, and so turn weekdays into Sundays, meals into sacraments, homes into temples, and earth into heaven” (Charles H. Spurgeon).

The Gospel asks us to be in a relationship with Jesus Christ. In the New Testament Paul says: “I 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, so 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, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power” (Ephesians 1:17-19).

Have you had the eyes of your heart enlightened?

I remember a night several decades ago. I was preparing for a busy day at work. The next morning, I met with the CEO to go over the financial plans for the year in my division. My wife was packing to travel to Colorado early the next morning. At about 2am we received a call from the hospital, asking us to do emergency foster care. We agreed and drove to the hospital to pick up the child from the social worker. We took the small 5 year old child home and she never spoke a single word. My wife showered her and got her into some clean cloths. She said the water turned brown because the child was so dirty. She also inspected her hair for lice and found out that she was covered in lice eggs. It was early in the morning at this point and I had to think about getting the kids up in a couple of hours to go to school. I knew we had to take care of the

head lice before they spread to the whole family, so I sat down in the bathroom, put Rid on the girls head and carefully combed all the lice out of her hair. It took several hours and I was feeling totally exhausted and frustrated. Then, my heart was filled and I felt as though I was ministering to Jesus. I felt a clarity that was remarkable and from then on I knew that my ministry would always be to look after children. The eyes of my heart were truly enlightened and I knew that I could persevere of whatever was in front of me because God was with me.

People of God have always longed for wholeness, but after thousands of years people still think we can accomplish it by ourselves. We scamper around like squirrels gathering nuts before winter because we are uncertain of what tomorrow will bring. We find our hope in places like the lottery and we sedate ourselves with alcohol and drugs to obscure our own helplessness. We continue to divide ourselves in like-minded groups, even going to battle with family and friends on social media. We reach a place where the very fabric of God's creation is torn by human actions and bad choices, but it is also in this place of confusion and sorrow that we look again for the connection that will make us whole.

Do you remember the story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke?

The rich man walks past poor Lazarus every day during his life. When the rich man dies he is tormented by thirst. He asks Lazarus to dip his finger in cool water to cool his burning tongue, but the rich man is so distant from God that there is a giant chasm between him and Lazarus. The rich man then pleads to tell his five brothers. The Father tells the rich man that if people won't believe Moses and the prophets, they probably won't even believe it if he rises from the dead.

Jesus came that we might have life and live it abundantly. Jesus is a light to all nations, an alternative to the self-indulgent madness, greed, fear, and anxiety that is prevalent in society today. To the poor he brings hope. To the rich he brings water that will quench a thirst that money and possessions just can't satisfy. Jesus gives us the free will to follow his path to glory and we know that this course does not come without a price.

When our hearts are enlightened by the love of God, we become a means of God's grace and mercy in the world. God calls us not to focus on our differences, but what we are struggling with together. St Johns will continue to focus this month in giving to those in need.

There will be a day when each of us will meet our Lord. To those who love him, he will say, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 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, 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" (Matt, 25:34-36). "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that all who believe in him might have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Desmond Tutu describes a light bulb that shone brightly and proudly. "[It] began to strut about arrogantly, quite unmindful of how . . . it could shine so brilliantly, thinking that it was all due to its own merit and skill." One day the light bulb is taken out of the socket and placed on a table.

"Try as hard as it could, the light bulb could bring forth no light and brilliance. . . . It had never known that its light came from the power station.

We long to be in unity with our God who is the source of all light. Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing. Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name. For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations (Psalm 100). God restores all things through his steadfast love. The "Steadfast love" of God that endures forever is translated *hesed*, which in Hebrew is the covenant love of God. Christ died on the cross to show us that God loves us, forgives us, and yearns for us to draw near. Augustine once said that, "My heart is restless until it rests in you." Without God we are like a light bulb out of a socket.

Sometimes it is only in places like the foot of the cross, in places of confusion and despair, and in places of pain and suffering when we feel totally disconnected, in the midst of political unrest, and during a Covid Pandemic that is unlike anything that we could have imagined, that we realize that Christ's love is the answer. With the eyes of our heart enlightened, we focus on the needs of others and we know that Christ is the Kings of Kings and the Lord of Lords and we commit ourselves once again to the path of loving God with all our heart, soul and mind and loving our neighbor, as Christ loves us.

Amen.