

**“Christ, the King of All Rulers”**

Meditation Preached by The Rev. Jennifer Cameron

November 22, 2020 – St. Columba Presbyterian Church, Belleville

**Hymns for Worship Video – November 22, 2020**

“O for a world where everyone” #730 in the Book of Praise Vv. 1, 2, 4

O for a world where everyone respects each other’s ways,  
Where love is lived and all is done  
With justice and with praise

O for a world where goods are shared and misery relieved,  
Where truth is spoken, children spared,  
Equality achieved

The poor are rich, the weak are strong, the foolish ones are wise.  
Tell all who mourn: outcasts belong,  
Who perishes will rise

*Words: Miriam Therese Winter Music: Carl G. Glaser*  
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“Rejoice the Lord is King” #267 in the Book of Praise Vv. 1, 2, 3, 5

Rejoice the Lord is King  
Your Lord and King adore  
Mortals give thanks and sing  
And triumph evermore  
Lift up your heart;  
Lift up your voice; rejoice, again I say, rejoice

Jesus the Saviour reigns  
The God of truth and love  
When He had purged our stains  
He took His seat above  
Lift up your heart;  
Lift up your voice; rejoice, again I say, rejoice

His kingdom cannot fail  
He rules o'er earth and heaven  
The keys of death and hell  
Are to our Jesus given  
Lift up your heart;  
Lift up your voice; rejoice, again I say, rejoice

Rejoice in glorious hope  
Jesus the Judge shall come  
And take His servants up  
To their eternal home  
We soon shall hear  
The archangel's voice;  
The trump of God shall sound: rejoice

*Charles Wesley / John Darwall*

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“Open my Eyes, That I May See” #500 in the Book of Praise

Open my eyes, that I may see  
Glimpses of truth Thou hast for me  
Place in my hands the wonderful key  
That shall unclasp and set me free  
Silently now I wait for Thee  
Ready my God Thy will to see  
Open my eyes: illumine me  
Spirit divine

Open my ears, that I may hear  
Voices of truth Thou sendest clear  
And while the wave notes fall on my ear  
Everything false will disappear  
Silently now I wait for Thee  
Ready my God Thy will to see  
Open my ears: illumine me  
Spirit divine

Open my mouth, and let me bear  
Gladly the warm truth everywhere  
Open my heart and let me prepare  
Love with Thy children thus to share  
Silently now I wait for Thee  
Ready my God Thy will to see  
Open my heart: illumine me  
Spirit divine

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**Scripture Texts: Ephesians 1:15-23**

<sup>15</sup> For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, <sup>16</sup> I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup> I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. <sup>18</sup> I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, <sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength <sup>20</sup> he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

**Matthew 25:31-46**

<sup>31</sup> "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

<sup>34</sup> "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

<sup>37</sup> "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

<sup>40</sup> "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

<sup>41</sup> "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

<sup>44</sup> "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

<sup>45</sup> "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

<sup>46</sup> "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

## **Meditation**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Periodically, we hear the question being raised about whether or not it is time for Canada to leave the monarchy. There is some thought that our nation's remaining under the Queen's reign is because she is the best-loved monarch in history. But there will come a time when the Prince of Wales will take the throne, the commonwealth will mourn the passing of a loved and respected Queen, and the question will be raised again as the commonwealth welcomes a new King. Some will say we should leave the fold and democratically elect a Canadian citizen to lead the country.

I am not going to share my opinion about the possibility of leaving the commonwealth, because I honestly don't know. Politics aside, I kind of like being a part of something bigger, part of a greater whole that looks after the smaller parts within. Years ago my Dad took a friend and I to see Paul McCartney in concert. It was awesome – it was Paul McCartney! He sang all the favourites, both from his Beatles and Wings days and from his solo career. To end the show (before the long encore of “Hey Jude”) McCartney said he and his band wanted to perform a song they loved, but they didn't sing it everywhere they played because it only goes over well in certain places. He then struck the first chords of “Mull of Kintyre,” a loved Scottish folk ballad. When it came to the musical interlude, the Peel Regional Pipe Band marched onto the stage, bagpipes in full swing, drums in perfect rhythm. The crowd went nuts, some even in tears. McCartney knew what he was doing, and my Dad explained to us after the concert that he guessed they only perform that song in the commonwealth nations. It made sense to me. It gives us a sense of being connected to something historical, and bigger than us. I don't really have an opinion on the political side of the argument about Canada staying or leaving, but there is something meaningful about being a part of something significant.

Today's Scripture readings both refer to our being a part of something bigger than ourselves and our local church. They both remind us we are a part of a greater kingdom than any earthly monarch could ever rule. In fact, earthly monarchs – no matter where they are in the world or how far their reach of authority goes – fall under the umbrella of this greater kingdom, for they fall under the rule of the greater King. *And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church...*

Christ is the King of all Kings, the King of all Queens, the King of all Presidents and Prime Ministers, for his Kingship oversees a people that transcends the boundaries of earthly territory. 1 Peter 2:9 reads: *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

God's people are a holy nation.

We are a community that spans all times and places, all generations, all the world.

Christ, our King, transcends all earthly rulers and powers, all earthly authority.

King of kings and Lord of lords: glory, hallelujah!

Today's Gospel reading is a popular one, one that is quite familiar to many of us because it is the go-to passage for illustrating the ministry of compassion and justice to which the church is called. It reminds us that when we care for those in need, those treated unjustly, those who may be isolated and alone, we care for Christ himself.

When we care for those he loves we care for him.

When we show love and compassion for those he loves, we show love and compassion for him.

This passage also illustrates something else. One sermon I came across this week put it this way: God will judge us according to our response to human need. Some Christians ask people to stand up and make a decision for Christ. This is a good thing to do, but it does not go far enough. Others ask us to praise the Lord; also a good thing, but Jesus says it is not enough. Still others ask us to follow scripture carefully and to obey the commandments; all well and good, but still, it is not enough. Jesus tells us as directly and simply as he possibly could, that our final judgment is going to be based on what help we have given to others. At the same time, we understand that we are saved by grace, yet we cannot ignore the strength of Christ's words.<sup>1</sup>

It is not enough to say we are saved by grace. We have to trust that assurance, and we have to live in it. How can we live a life of grace if we do not extend grace to others? Salvation is not something we can keep to ourselves, nor is it granted in isolation. Our gratitude for God's promise in Christ is a gratitude we must actively live.

I was reading an article on today's text from Ephesians, and the author was reflecting on it as a part of the greater letter to the Ephesian church. We must always interpret a passage of Scripture as a part of a greater whole so that we understand it in context. When we read the New Testament, we do so with the knowledge of the risen Christ, and what his resurrection means for us. This is what the article I saw this week said about these verses from Ephesians 1... "the notion of power, dominion, rule, and authority are re-imagined through the life of the believer. That is, God's power at work in Christ is also God's power at work in the believer toward good works (2:10), in the life of the assembly... that makes known the gift of God's grace and the riches of Christ (3:10), and in the struggle against the powers of this world (6:10-17)."<sup>2</sup>

In other words, we portray Christ through our lives.

We proclaim his power through our faith.

We communicate his teaching through our discipleship.

We declare his Kingship through our allegiance.

When we behave in Christ-like ways, we show Christ to the world, to our community, to our families, friends and neighbours.

This is the last Sunday of the church year. Next week we begin the season of Advent, which begins a new cycle of the church's life, worship and ministry. This being the Sunday to bring this season to a close means we have moved through the birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection and ongoing ministry of Christ and his disciples. We have made the annual journey

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<sup>1</sup> Desperatepreacher.com Resources for Christ the King Sunday. "The Cobbler and his Guest" based on Matthew 25:31-46.

<sup>2</sup> Workingpreacher.org Resources for Christ the King Sunday. Prayer written by Karoline Lewis, Luther Seminary, originally published on this site November 23, 2008.

through Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and the time after Pentecost that fills out the year. The time between Pentecost and this week is referred to as “Ordinary Time.” I’ve never given much thought to what we call this season. Its name does not reflect the amazing stories of the Old Testament and the extraordinary ministry of Jesus, the disciples and the apostles that we share during these many weeks. This year, however, I’m paying a lot more attention to “Ordinary Time,” because this year has been anything but ordinary.

Think about the various synonyms for the word ‘ordinary:’ mundane, normal, average, common, usual. Would you use any of those terms for these past months? Pentecost Sunday was May 31<sup>st</sup>. I don’t think ‘ordinary’ would be a word we would use to describe what we have experienced since then. Life has been anything but what we used to know as ‘normal.’ It’s been rather unusual, unpredictable, uncommon. Nothing ordinary about it. And yet today brings Ordinary Time to a close. I feel like I should add LOL to that statement. I’m sure I’m not alone in wishing things could feel a little more ordinary these days!

To put a positive spin on the less-than-ordinary time we’ve been experiencing this year, I realize that this is a wonderful illustration for Christian faith and life. There is nothing ordinary about it!

We worship God, who was revealed most fully as he came to the world in human form, a newborn baby – conceived and born in extraordinary circumstances.

He taught as no one else had. What he taught was the fulfillment of all that the prophets had said. He performed extraordinary healings and miracles in full sight of the people, sometimes with just a word.

He made serious enemies, was betrayed by one of his closest followers, died a horrible death, and yet in that death accomplished an extraordinary thing – the defeat of death’s grip on God’s people.

And he didn’t stop there.

He rose from death. Not a ghost or a vision granted to a few select people, but physically rose from the grave and commissioned his disciples to carry on his ministry until he would return again and establish his final kingdom on earth.

Does any of this sound ordinary to you? It’s EXTRAORDINARY! There was nothing about Jesus that was common, normal or average in his time in history, and there is still nothing common, normal or average about him. His Kingship is like no earthly monarch or ruler.

Earthly kings and queens eventually die, or are overthrown, and someone else takes the throne. Eventually we will bid farewell to Elizabeth II and crown Charles, and then William, and then George, and so on. But Christ the King has a unique claim to his throne... he will reign for eternity! He will not die – he did that once for all and left it behind as he took his place at his Father’s side. There will be no royal succession, because the King of all earthly rulers can never die! There is nothing ordinary about that!

Ordinary time? I don’t think so. Not for those who follow Jesus. Perhaps the extraordinary situation of the pandemic can help us remember we always live extraordinary lives

because we are claimed by an extraordinary Ruler. In the words of the great hymn writer Charles Wesley:

His kingdom cannot fail; he rules o'er earth and heaven; The keys of death and hell are to our Jesus given... Lift up your heart; Lift up your voice; rejoice, again I say, rejoice...

Rejoice in glorious hope, Jesus the Judge shall come and take His servants up to their eternal home... We soon shall hear the archangel's voice; the trump of God shall sound: rejoice! (public domain)

Not-so-ordinary time comes to its close in the church year today, in our not-so-ordinary world, as we prepare for a not-so-ordinary beginning to a not-so-ordinary new church year. We honour our extraordinary King of all earthly rulers as we look to the new season, and give thanks for his reign over all, for all, forever. As we anticipate whatever may come in the next year, the next month, the next week, we do so with extraordinary confidence in God through Christ, who makes all things new, and who is the most unique and uncommon Saviour – the only Saviour – in whom we place our trust.

I'd like to close with a prayer I discovered this week as I thought about what it means to us that Christ is our King.

Let us pray...

Almighty God, who gave your Son Jesus Christ a realm,  
where all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him;  
make us loyal followers of our living Lord,  
that we may always hear his word, follow his teachings, and live in his Spirit;  
And hasten the day when every knee shall bow  
and every tongue confess that he is Lord  
to your eternal glory. Amen.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Desperatepreacher.com Resources for Christ the King Sunday. Prayer written by A. Campbell Frazier.