

The Last Sunday After Pentecost –



The Feast of Christ the King

Greetings, one and all, and welcome home to St. Peter's by the Sea. Mary Sue Gee, Nancy Castle, Jeff Wheelwright and I bring you this service of prayer, scripture and song with love. If you go to our facebook page, you can watch and participate from home: facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay Scroll down until you see today's Sunday Missive, anytime after 11 A.M. on Sunday, November 22. No facebook account is needed! The links that follow each hymn will take you to youtube videos of a wide range of people around the world singing those hymns – enjoy them! Please direct any questions or comments to your rector, The Rev. Sidney Symington via: (203) 209-2339 or: sssymington@gmail.com. **And so we begin:**

Grace and peace to you from God; may God fill you with truth and joy. May the Lord bless you and keep you this day, for this is the day which the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

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. **Amen.**

Almighty God, who gave such grace to your apostle Andrew that he readily obeyed the call of your Son Jesus Christ, and brought his brother with him: Give us, who are called by your holy Word, grace to follow him without delay, and to bring those near to us into his gracious presence. **Amen.**

Almighty and gracious Father, we give you thanks for the fruits of the earth in their season and for the labors of those who harvest them. Make us, we pray, faithful stewards of your great bounty, for the provision of our necessities and the relief of all who are in need, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. ***Amen.***

Hymn 416 – For the Beauty of the Earth

For the beauty of the earth, for the beauty of the skies,
For the love which from our birth over and around us lies.

Christ our God, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the beauty of each hour of the day and of the night,
Hill and vale, and tree and flower, sun and moon and stars of light,

For the joy of ear and eye, for the heart and mind's delight,
For the mystic harmony linking sense to sound and sight

For each perfect gift of thine, to the world so freely given,
Faith and hope and love divine, peace on earth and joy in heaven.

A Reading from the Book of Ezekiel – Chapter 34

For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As 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. I 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. I 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. This is the Word of the Lord.

Psalm 95

O come, let us sing to the Lord* Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving* Let us make a joyful noise with songs of praise!

For the Lord is a great God* And a great King above all gods.

In the Lord hand are all the corners of the earth* The heights of the hills are God's also.

The sea is God's, who has made it* And the dry land, which the Lord's hands have formed.

O come, let us worship and bow down* And kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

For this is our God, and we are the people of God's pasture, and the sheep of God's hand* O that today you would listen to the voice of the Lord!

A Reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians – Chapter 1

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. I pray that God may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which you are called, what are the riches of your glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of God's power for us who believe. God put this power to work in Christ who was raised from the dead and seated 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 God has put all things under the feet of Jesus, the head over all things in the church, which is the body and the fullness of the one who fulfills all in all. This is the Word of the Lord.

Hymn 405 – All Things Bright and Beautiful

All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful, the Lord God made them all.

Each little flower that opens, each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colors, he made their tiny wings.

The purple-headed mountain, the river running by,
The sunset, and the morning that brightens up the sky.

A Reading from the Gospel According to Matthew – Chapter 25

“When the Son of Man comes in glory with all the angels, then he will sit on the throne of Creation. All 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 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 followers; 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 will protest, ‘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 any one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ This is the Gospel of the Lord.

This is the Feast of Christ the King -- that announcement is as puzzling as it is glorious. For us, the idea of a king is a mixed up one to say the least. The actual feast day was decreed by the Pope Pius the Eleventh, whose efforts to warn and stand against the tide of Naziism, both in Italy and the rest of Europe were unavailing.

By early 1937, the church hierarchy in Germany, which had initially attempted to work with the new government, had become disillusioned and fed up. In his encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, (With Burning Concern) Pius accused the Nazi Government of sowing the "tares of suspicion, discord,

hatred, calumny, and both secret and open fundamental hostility to Christ and His Church". He warned of the storm clouds of extermination and genocide that threatened Germany.

Copies of his statement had to be smuggled into the country so they could be read in all the parishes of Germany. Distribution was kept secret in an attempt to ensure the unhindered public reading, as it condemned the paganism of Nazism, the myth of race and blood, and the fallacies in the Nazi conception of God:

"Whoever exalts race, or the greatness of one people or state, or a particular form of government, or the depositories of power, or any other fundamental element of the human community –whatever its function in worldly things – whoever raises any of these notions above their standard value and divinizes them to an idolatrous level distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God; that one is far from the true faith in God and from the concept of life which that faith upholds."

The Nazis responded with an intensification of their campaign against the churches. There were mass arrests of clergy and those who had participated in the printing and distribution of the encyclical went to jail and concentration camps. The Western democracies failed to mount a response, which failure Pius labeled bitterly a "conspiracy of silence".

As the extreme nature of Nazi racial anti-Semitism became obvious, and Mussolini began imitating Hitler's race laws in Italy, Pius continued to make his position clear: "Mark well that in the Catholic Mass, Abraham is our Patriarch and forefather. Anti-Semitism is incompatible with the lofty thought which that fact expresses. It is a movement with which we Christians can have nothing to do. I say to you it is impossible for a Christian to take part in anti-Semitism. It is inadmissible. Through Christ and in Christ we are the spiritual progeny of Abraham. Spiritually, we are all Semites"

Pope Pius XI had been increasingly ill when, on 25 November 1938, he suffered two heart attacks within several hours. He died of a third heart attack on 10 February 1939, at the age of 81. Some believe he was murdered by slow poison. His primary physician was Francesco Petacci, father of Claretta Petacci, Mussolini's mistress. His successor, called Pius XII, sought to appease the Nazi's and thus became complicit in their crimes.

In 1925, the earlier Pius thought a good message to send to the fascists would be: Mussolini may be our dictator, but Christ is our King. And in a

brave challenge to worldly power, Pius declared that the primary allegiance for all Christian people is to God, and there would thenceforth be an official day every year to remind everybody of the fact. So that when we said “Thy kingdom come,” we might remember that we’re talking about something as real as it is atypical. This protest didn’t stop the horrors of fascism, but it did help keep the seeds of hope from dying. Anglicans and others along with the Roman Catholics have kept the feast day.

What can it mean for us, this long and powerful tradition of Jesus’ reign, his being the King of the Jews, the King of Kings, and the King Eternal? What can these characterizations do to orient us towards God? In order to get our attention Christ the King must be very different indeed from any other ruler.

Jesus is very reluctant to call himself a King. To the question, “Are you a king?” he answers Pilate, “You say so,” and “My kingdom is not of this world,” but he doesn’t sound as if he’s trying to prove a powerful point. His prevailing attitude seems to be one of humility, not triumph.

It is a kingdom like no other – one no human beings have experienced – but we do have the necessary instructions. And we have the promise: “...heed me and walk in my ways...at once I will turn my hand against your enemies...and fill your mouth with honey...from the rock!” Jesus’ words are the description, the manual for this strange, revolutionary kingdom of which we would be part. But the parables all demand our interpretation, our acceptance and our action in order to make sense. It is a kingdom of God’s making, but also of **our** doing.

Prayers

God, lover of life, lover of these lives,
God, lover of our souls; of our bodies; of all that exists,
It is your love that keeps it all alive.
May we live in this love.
May we never doubt this love.
May we know that we are love,
That we were created for love,
That we are a reflection of you,
That you love yourself reflected in us,
And therefore we are perfectly lovable.

May we never doubt this deep and abiding and perfect goodness. May we never forget, we are because you are.

We pray for the people of this hurting world, sojourning through a time of intense unrest, change, challenge, illness and growth. For world leaders, our country's new president, legislators and local councils, that those whom we trust to govern may do so wisely and compassionately, with justice, integrity and peace as their goals. Pray for the people of the world.

For this sacred and holy Earth, which, by our actions throughout the ages, we have abused and polluted with selfish and desperate abandon, that humankind may impel one another to live in the balance and harmony you have prepared for us and for all living things. Pray for our planet.

We pray for those in need, sickness or distress: for all who suffer from the discomforting, disturbing and disastrous effects of COVID-19. We pray for businesses and workers who struggle to make ends meet, for those who are alienated and isolated; those sheltering in their homes, and those with no homes in which to shelter. Pray for the unemployed poor.

We pray for those who are far off and those who are near, especially Jan Swanson, Jim Harker, John Powell, Lynn Enns, Janelle Muff, and those we name now – silently or aloud -- beloved of this community who are sick, injured, undergoing medical treatment or in recovery. Pray for all who are in any need or trouble this day. *Amen*

Accept, O Lord, the fervent prayers of your people. In the multitude of your mercies, look with compassion upon us and all who turn to you for help; for you are gracious, O lover of souls, and to you we give all of our thanks and praise, Creator, Saviour and Spirit. *Amen*

Hymn 290 – Come, Ye Thankful People, Come

Come, ye thankful people, come, raise the song of harvest home;
All is safely gathered in, ere the winter storms begin;
God, our Maker, doth provide for our wants to be supplied;
Come to God's own temple, come, raise the song of harvest home.

All the world is God's own field, fruit unto his praise to yield;
Wheat and tares together sown, unto joy or sorrow grown;

First the blade, and then the ear, then the full corn shall appear;
Grant, O harvest Lord, that we wholesome grain and pure may be.

For the Lord our God shall come, and shall take his harvest home;
From his field shall in that day all offenses purge away;
Give his angels charge at last in the fire the tares to cast,
But the fruitful ears to store in the garner evermore.

And now, may the peace that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and Christ. And may the blessing of God the Creator, the Redeemer, the sustaining Spirit be with you this day and remain with you and those you love always. Let us go in peace to love and serve The Lord. ***Thanks be to God, alleluia, alleluia!***