

CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY

26 NOVEMBER 2023



OUR SAVIOR'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY

REIGN OF CHRIST THE KING

INTRODUCTION

Christ the King Sunday is celebrated on the last Sunday of Ordinary time (last Sunday after Pentecost), before the beginning of Advent that starts the new Church Year. As the last Sunday of the Christian Church Year, Christ the King Sunday is the climax and conclusion of the Church's liturgical journey through the life of Christ and the Gospel message. Its purpose is to celebrate the coming reign of Christ as King of the Earth and his completion of the renewed creation that marks the fullness of the Kingdom of God. That hope is born from the entire life of Christ and his teachings that have been celebrated in the seasons of the Church Year during the past twelve months. In celebrating the Reign of Christ the King, this Sunday also provides an appropriate bridge to the new Church Year that begins the following Sunday on the first Sunday of Advent with an emphasis on hope and expectation, the longing for the coming of the Kingdom of God amid the darkness of a sinful world.

As such a bridge between the completed year and the beginning of a new year, Christ the King services often use Scripture and song to provide both a retrospective and introductory overview of the journey through the life of Christ and the Gospel message that the Seasons of the Church Year provides. This offers not only an opportunity for a worshipful reflection on the significance of the life of Christ, it also presents an opportunity to remind people of the meaning of the various seasons of the Church Year.

SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN WORSHIP, SETTING 10

The liturgy is in the front of the ELW starting on page 203.

The hymns begin in the middle of the ELW with numbers at the top of the pages.

PRELUDE

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PSALM 95 *(read in unison)*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. *(concluding...now and forever.)*

C: Amen

We have been on a journey the past twelve months as we have traveled through the Christian Church Year. We have followed in the steps of Jesus as he was birthed in a stable, as he walked the dusty hillsides of Galilee, opened blind eyes and made the lame to walk again, as he taught the multitudes and the disciples, as he was crucified, and rose again. We have celebrated the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, reflected on the mission of the Church, and what it means to be a disciple of the Christ. Today is the last Sunday of that journey for this year. Next Sunday we begin celebrating Advent as we once again begin that journey to remind ourselves who we are and whose we are.

We do so knowing that the Kingdom of God that Jesus brought is a present reality in our lives. And yet we also know that there is a future Kingdom over which God will reign in Christ, a Kingdom in which the world will once again fully reflect its creator. Today we celebrate Christ as past, present, and future King over all the earth, at the same time that we express our hope and our Faith in that coming Kingdom.

So today we will look back at this past year's journey with Jesus. But we are also looking forward to our journey this coming year, as we express each week our Faith in the transforming power of God at work in our world, and in our Church, and in our lives to restore all of creation to his purposes.

THE JOURNEY

ADVENT: The royal color of Blue begins the Church Year in *Advent*, a word that means "coming". We pace this season of four Sundays hearing again the silence of the prophets, experiencing the breathless waiting of the Israelites hoping for a Messiah. We sing the song "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" with longing, not because we seek a Messiah yet to come to the world, but because the Christ has come and we long for him to come to us again. The quiet pace of Advent is in direct contrast to the bustling commercialism of the secular holidays. And so we begin our new year in Advent, reminding ourselves that in the midst of the worldliness of our lives we need to renew our relationship to this King who has come.

Scripture: Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass; their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers; the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers; the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms and carry them in his bosom and gently lead the mother sheep.

L: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

HYMN: O COME, O COME EMMANUEL

♪ O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

CHRISTMAS: In the season of Christmas we change the sanctuary colors to White and Gold, a celebration of the purity of the infant who was born in a manger, and yet a King with all the splendor of God come to dwell with his people. Christmas Day is both the culmination of the waiting of the Advent season, and the beginning of twelve days of celebration as we rejoice in the gift of our Savior and the daily rebirth of grace in our own lives.

Scripture: John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

L: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

HYMN: JOY TO THE WORLD

♪ Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

EPIPHANY: Epiphany means "to make known," and in the season of Epiphany we remember the ways and events through which God revealed himself through Jesus Christ.

The colors of Epiphany are usually the colors of Christmas, White and Gold, the colors of celebration, newness, and hope that mark the most sacred days of the church year. In traditions that only observe a single day for Epiphany, the colors are often changed after Epiphany to the colors of Ordinary Time, usually Green or thematic sanctuary colors, until Transfiguration Sunday, the last Sunday before the beginning of Lent. The colors for Transfiguration Sunday are usually the colors of Holy Days, White and Gold.

As with most aspects of the Christian liturgical calendar, Epiphany has significance as a teaching tool in the church. The Wise Men or Magi who brought gifts to the infant Jesus were the first Gentiles to acknowledge Jesus as "King" and so were the first to "show" or "reveal" Jesus to a wider world as the incarnate Christ. This act of worship by the Magi, which corresponded to Simeon's blessing that this child Jesus would be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" (*Luke 2:32*), was one of the first indications that Jesus came for all people, of all nations, of all races, and that the work of God in the world would not be limited to only a few.

The day is now observed as a time of focusing on the mission of the church in reaching others by "showing" Jesus as the Savior of all people. It is also a time of focusing on Christian brotherhood and fellowship, especially in healing the divisions of prejudice and bigotry that we all too often create between God's children.

Scripture: Isaiah 60:1-6

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the peoples, but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together; they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried in their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you; the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

L: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

HYMN: AS WITH GLADNESS MEN OF OLD

**♪ Holy Jesus, ev'ry day
keep us in the narrow way;
and when earthly things are past,
bring our ransomed souls at last
where they need no star to guide,
where no clouds thy glory hide.**

LENT: With the ashes on our heads after the service of Ash Wednesday, the sanctuary colors for Lent turn to a somber Purple or Violet and to Black at the end of the Passion Week. Throughout the six weeks of Lent we pace the length of Jesus' three years of ministry. Throughout the weeks we relearn the faces and names of people who, like you and me, were sometimes faithful and sometimes selfish; people who heard the good news and responded and others who laughed and scorned; men, women, and children who heard Jesus' words and watched his life and came hungry and were fulfilled, or who walked away because they could not use him for their own ends.

It is a long season, a season that calls us to stop and take a look at our life in the light of Christlikeness, and humble ourselves before our God who says to us gently, "Come, let us talk this over. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing to obey, you shall eat the good things of the earth." (*Isaiah 1:18-19*)

The season of Lent culminates in "Passion Week," from a Latin word that means "to suffer." Starting with Palm Sunday and the joyful entry of Israel's Messiah-King in to Jerusalem, it ends with that very same crowd yelling "Crucify him, crucify him." In between these two days, the week's events are remembered with various services that pace the Passion Week: A Seder meal, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Tenebrae, and the Holy Saturday Vigil.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:1-11

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity, and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account.

Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases, yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

*Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with affliction.
When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his
offspring and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the
LORD shall prosper. Out of his anguish he shall see; he shall find
satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant,
shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.*

L: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

HYMN: IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST I GLORY

**♪ Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,
by the cross are sanctified;
peace is there that knows no measure,
joys that through all time abide.**

YOUTH SERMON – REV. LEAH HOLLOWAY-NILSEN

SERMON – REV. LEAH HOLLOWAY-NILSEN

CONFESSION OF FAITH: NICENE CREED

P: Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

P: Let us turn our hearts to God, our breath and life, as we pray for the church, the world and all who are in need.

(Each petition ends: P: Hear us, O God. C: Your mercy is great.)

P: We offer our spoken prayers and those held in our hearts trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen.

SHARING OF THE PEACE

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

OFFERING

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

EASTER: Morning dawns and Mary Magdalene weeps at the tomb until she is told the good news "He is not dead! He has risen!" And that call echoes down through the centuries as Christians around the world joyfully cry out "Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen indeed!" year after year on the highest and holiest day of the Christian calendar.

Easter lilies adorn the sanctuary, the colors change to the brightness of White and Gold to portray the purity and kingliness of our Risen Savior. There is no joy compared to an Easter Sunday after the solemn pace of Lent. Three days before we buried our beloved

Jesus; today He lives! We wept with Peter on the night he was crucified, and on Easter we are awed anew by the great news that He Lives!

And the fifty days of Easter ring jubilantly with the new life and new hope that the Risen Savior brings to us, to our world, and to all peoples who open their hearts to him. We listen in on the conversations of the disciples as they struggle to wrap their human hearts and minds around this new revelation. We watch as those who previously had persecuted the people of God now fall on their knees in awe and wonder. We experience anew for ourselves in this season the freedom and joy and the power, strength, and life that is our heritage as the people of God.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, 20-22

Now I want you to understand, brothers and sisters, the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures and that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human, for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.

L: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

HYMN: THINE IS THE GLORY

♪ Lo, Jesus meets thee, risen from the tomb!
Lovingly he greets thee, scatters fear and gloom;
let his church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,
for the Lord now liveth; death hath lost its sting!
Thine is the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry thou o'er death hast won!

PENTECOST: The Red of flames is the sanctuary color of Pentecost as we remember the great rushing wind and the dancing flames like fire, and the words of Jesus, baptizing his disciples with the Holy Fire of the Spirit. The disciples and followers of Jesus were one moment huddled in fear in a small upper room. Then the Holy Spirit came in power and they rushed out of the building and into the streets, telling everyone about the good news in ways that all could understand. Today? Well, one day we are ordinary people, the next we are his evangelists, and pastors, and healers, and mercy-bringers, and the Body of Christ, redeemed by his blood, one in ministry to the entire world. Are **you** willing to be filled with the Spirit?

Scripture: John 20:19-22

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Acts 2:1-12

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and

proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”

L: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

HYMN: GOD OF TEMPEST, GOD OF WHIRLWIND

**♪ God of tempest, God of whirlwind,
as on Pentecost descend!
Drive us out from sheltered comfort;
past these walls your people send!
Sweep us into costly service,
there with Christ to bear the cross,
there with Christ to bear the cross!**

ORDINARY DAYS: Ordinary time includes the counted Sundays between Pentecost and Advent. Since there are no Holy Days in this time it serves to remind us of the ordinary times of life. The book of Acts and the Epistles give us a clear picture of ordinary people, going about ordinary lives, but doing extraordinary things that built the Kingdom of God. The Church was growing by leaps and bounds, both the individuals within it and the worldwide Church. So we use the color of Green to depict this growing time, and pray for the same thing within *our* ordinary lives. We hear again the Good News, we are instructed in the ways of the world and the Kingdom, and we are shown the vision of the Church and our responsibility within it. We hear afresh the voices of the gospel writers, the prophets, and Paul, Peter, James, each exhorting us to respond anew to the call of God to be his people in a world that is hungry for the grace, love, and peace we bring into every minute of life, if we are walking in the Light, if we are "abiding in the vine." Ordinary? Yes, but through our lives God brings the living water to a thirsty world in our offerings of service and mercy that we offer to others on a daily basis. And this is the *extraordinary* way that God builds his Kingdom - through ordinary people like you and me.

Scripture: John 15:1-9

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.

L: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

HYMN: TAKE MY LIFE AND LET IT BE

**♪ Take my life, that I may be
consecrated, Lord, to thee;
take my moments and my days;
let them flow in ceaseless praise.**

CHRIST THE KING/EUCHARIST: It is Christ the Savior-Shepherd-King who presides over this table. At the Eucharist table we can all gather, "neither Jew nor Greek, male or female, slave or free", but one in Christ. Here we can all come freely to experience and to participate in this means of grace that visibly exhibits to us each week the heart and mind of our Creator, our Savior, and our Sustainer.

On this "Christ the King" Sunday we are reminded that God is with us through all the seasons of life as the writer of Ecclesiastes so poignantly reminds us. As we gather around the table today may you feel the freedom, the joy, the strength of Jesus' presence in your spirit. Remember his words? "Look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time." (*Matthew 28:20*)

GREAT THANKSGIVING

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

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P: It is indeed right...and join their unending hymn:

**C: ♪ Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
 heav'n and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

LORD'S PRAYER

**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 and ever. Amen.**

Holy Communion is celebrated today.

*All who are baptized into Christ Jesus are invited to receive Holy Communion
Gluten-free wafers and white grape juice are available.*

**♪ O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
you suffered death our lives to save: have mercy now, we pray.**

**O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mercy now, we pray.**

**O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
eternal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.**

HYMN #654 “THE CHURCH’S ONE FOUNDATION”

POST COMMUNION BLESSING

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C: Amen

POST COMMUNION HYMN

**♪ Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise him, all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heav’nly host;
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.**

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

P: Let us pray. (*concluding*...Jesus Christ our Lord.)

C: Amen.

BLESSING

P: Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

C: Amen.

HYMN #434 “JESUS SHALL REIGN”

DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace. God is at work in you.

C: Thanks be to God!

RINGING OF THE BELL

POSTLUDE

Pastor: Rev. Leah Holloway-Nilsen
Organist: Jason Bousselot or Linda Whitman
Acolyte: Mason Easterday
Lector: Brian Bousselot
Communion Assistant: David Burke
Usher: Neil Holmquist
Cleaners: Jason Bousselot

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This Week At A Glance

Wednesday	6:00 pm	Confirmation at Faith
	7:00 pm	Bible Jam at Faith
Sunday	8:00 am	Worship service at Faith
	9:25 am	Sunday School at Our Savior's
	10:30 am	Worship service at Our Savior's

Those to keep in prayer: Mallory Bousselot; the homebound: Carol Christensen, Ron Gasper, Delores Lahann, Myrna Kay Petersen, Rusty Porth, Betty Schau, Bus Seastrand and Vera St. John; and those serving in the military.

Advent begins on December 3rd with the 'Hanging of the Greens' service. Advent is the first season in the church year and focuses on the long-awaited birth of Jesus at Bethlehem and the Second Advent when Christ will return.

Mid-week Advent services will be held Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm. A meal will be offered at 6:15 pm. Our Savior's will host the service on December 6th and 13th. Faith will host the service on December 20th.

The confirmation students have selected Holden Evening Prayer and will plan scriptures and hymns for the service. If you would like to assist the confirmation students in leading the vocal music, please contact Pastor.

During the month of December, **winter coats, hats and gloves** will be collected for the Carroll Assistance Center.

The **God Squad Christmas party** will be at 7:30 pm on Wednesday, December 13, at Our Savior's Church. Junior high and high school youth are invited to join in the holiday fun!

The **Children's Christmas Program** will be at 10:30 am on Sunday, December 17, at Our Savior's. Two rehearsals are at 5:45 pm on Wednesdays, December 6 and 13, at Our Savior's. The final practice at 10:00 am on Saturday, December 16, will be followed by Christmas Caroling and a pizza party at Happy Joe's in DeWitt.

All reports for the **Faith and Our Savior's Annual Reports** are due in the church office by **Monday, December 18th**. These reports include: Pastor, Council Presidents, God Squad, Feeding the Children, Memorials and Gifts, Our Savior's Cemetery, and all Committees (Education, Outreach, Property and Management, and Worship). Financial reports, budgets, and audit reports are due in the church office by Monday, January 15, 2024.

2024 ELCA Youth Gathering Update: Dalton, David, Macailah, and Peyton need to raise \$5,000 to attend the Gathering in New Orleans and are about 33% of the way to their goal.

You can help them reach that goal by becoming a stockholder. Shares cost \$50 each. Investors will receive mail from the youth while at the Gathering and an invitation to a supper when they return. Forms can be found at both churches.

You may contact Heather Grau (563-424-0507) or Pastor Leah (262-914-9392) if you have questions.

GOD'S STANDARD OF JUDGMENT

Matthew 25:31-46

This is one of the most vivid parables Jesus ever spoke, and the lesson is crystal clear--that God will judge us in accordance with our reaction to human need. His judgment does not depend on the knowledge we have amassed, or the fame that we have acquired, or the fortune that we have gained, but on the help that we have given. And there are certain things which this parable teaches us about the help which we must give.

(i) It must be help in simple things. The things which Jesus picks out--giving a hungry man a meal, or a thirsty man a drink, welcoming a stranger, cheering the sick, visiting the prisoner--are things which anyone can do. It is not a question of giving away thousands of pounds, or of writing our names in the annals of history; it is a case of giving simple help to the people we meet every day. There never was a parable which so opened the way to glory to the simplest people.

(ii) It must be help which is uncalculating. Those who helped did not think that they were helping Christ and thus piling up eternal merit; they helped because they could not stop themselves. It was the natural, instinctive, quite uncalculating reaction of the loving heart. Whereas, on the other hand, the attitude of those who failed to help was; "If we had known it was you we would gladly have helped; but we thought it was only some common man who was not worth helping." It is still true that there are those who will help if they are given praise and thanks and publicity; but to help like that is not to help, it is to pander to self-esteem. Such help is not generosity; it is disguised selfishness. The help which wins the approval of God is that which is given for nothing but the sake of helping.

(iii) Jesus confronts us with the wonderful truth that all such help given is given to himself, and all such help withheld is withheld from himself. How can that be? If we really wish to delight a

parent's heart, if we really wish to move him to gratitude the best way to do it is to help his child. God is the great Father; and the way to delight the heart of God is to help his children, our fellow-men.

There were two men who found this parable blessedly true. The one was Francis of Assisi; he was wealthy and high-born and high-spirited. But he was not happy. He felt that life was incomplete. Then one day he was out riding and met a leper, loathsome and repulsive in the ugliness of his disease. Something moved Francis to dismount and fling his arms around this wretched sufferer; and in his arms the face of the leper changed to the face of Christ.

The other was Martin of Tours. He was a Roman soldier and a Christian. One cold winter day, as he was entering a city, a beggar stopped him and asked for alms. Martin had no money; but the beggar was blue and shivering with cold, and Martin gave what he had. He took off his soldier's coat, worn and frayed as it was; he cut it in two and gave half of it to the beggar man. That night he had a dream. In it he saw the heavenly places and all the angels and Jesus in the midst of them; and Jesus was wearing half of a Roman soldier's cloak. One of the angels said to him, "Master, why are you wearing that battered old cloak? Who gave it to you?" And Jesus answered softly, "My servant Martin gave it to me."

When we learn the generosity which without calculation helps men in the simplest things, we too will know the joy of helping Jesus Christ himself.

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