

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay**  
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski  
27th Sunday after Pentecost - Reign of Christ - November 24, 2024

## Call to Worship

Grace and peace to you from the One who is,  
who always was, and who is still to come—  
the Alpha and Omega—the beginning and the end.

**This is our God—  
the One who loves us, and who gave himself for us;  
who gathers us together in this place, and bids us seek his face.**

**Let's worship God together!** [re:Worship: Call to Worship: Revelation 1: 4-8](#)

## Hymn

*Seek ye first*

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1. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,  
and all these things shall be added unto you. Allelu, alleluia!
2. Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek and ye shall find;  
knock, and the door shall be opened unto you. Allelu, alleluia!
3. We do not live by bread alone, but by every word  
that proceeds from the mouth of God. Allelu, alleluia!

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## Prayer of Adoration

We worship you, O God, with joyful noise - with words of praise and adoration spoken and sung in the name of Jesus who brought your love song to us in person. In harmony with you, he puts new words in our mouths and new intentions in our hearts, especially a new understanding of power. Power shaped by love and righteousness, justice and mercy. We now know that power is not to be used to exploit or dominate, but to serve others as willingly as Jesus did. His life and death demonstrated how the love of power could be transformed by the power of love. We gather here today to celebrate your rule of love in our hearts as we experience it in Jesus and through the enabling gift of your Spirit.

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## Call to Reconciliation

While there are many with power in our world - power to hurt us, power to hire or fire us, power to control us - only God has the power to forgive us and make us new people. Let us confess how we fear the power of the world, and welcome the power of God's grace.

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## Unison Prayer for Forgiveness

The choices we make, Mighty God, reveal who we are. Choosing the lies of the world, your Word has not been on our lips. Choosing independent and isolated lives, we do not reflect your Spirit in our actions towards others. Choosing to exalt the powerful of our day, we are unable to follow the One whose weakness gives us life.

Forgive us, God who became weak for our sake. Do not turn your face from us, but help us to face ourselves honestly. Free us from our captivity, so we may faithfully follow Jesus Christ, our King, our Lord, our Savior.

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## Assurance of Forgiveness

Remember the promise the Apostle Paul declares: What will separate us from the love of Christ? Hardship? Distress? Peril or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through the God who loves us. Let us rejoice that, no matter what is happening around us, no matter what we have done, God's deep love will never let us go.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 27th Sunday after Pentecost. Reign of Christ. November 24, 2024. Year B.

## Scripture Reading John 18:33-38a

<sup>33</sup> Pilate went back into the palace and called for Jesus. He said,

“Are you the ‘King of the Jews’?”

<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered, “Are you saying this on your own, or did others tell you this about me?”

<sup>35</sup> Pilate said, “Do I look like a Jew?

Your people and your high priests turned you over to me. What did you do?”

<sup>36</sup> “My kingdom,” said Jesus, “doesn’t consist of what you see around you. If it did, my followers would fight so that I wouldn’t be handed over to the Jews. But I’m not that kind of king, not the world’s kind of king.”

<sup>37</sup> Then Pilate said, “So, are you a king or not?”

Jesus answered, “You tell me. Because I am King, I was born and entered the world so that I could witness to the truth. Everyone who cares for truth, who has any feeling for the truth, recognizes my voice.”

<sup>38</sup> Pilate said, “What is truth?”

[The Message \(MSG\)](#) Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## Message What is truth?

This Sunday marks the end of the church year. Each new Christian calendar year begins with Advent and the birth of the Messiah and ends with this, the Reign of Christ Sunday. The history behind this particular Sunday is something of a modern-day twist and having just come off of Remembrance Day it is intriguing to see how the Reign of Christ Sunday came about. Hear how Christian educator, Jessica Davis writes about this history.

Each year, Christians from around the world gather on the last Sunday of the church year to celebrate what is widely referred to as "Christ the King" or "Reign of Christ" Sunday. It is one of the most recent additions to the church calendar, instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925 and moved to its current date in 1970. By the late 1970s, [it was] adopted an amended version of the Roman lectionary, and it included Christ the King.

Pope Benedict XV, who began his papacy a month into World War I, was horrified at his inability to broker a peace treaty, and at the millions of bodies piling up all across Europe. In his first encyclical, *Ad Beatissimi Apostolorum*, Benedict declared, "There is no limit to the measure of ruin and of slaughter; day by day the earth is drenched with newly shed blood and is covered with the bodies of the wounded and of the slain."

When Benedict died in 1922, he was replaced by Pope Pius XI, who declared the aim of his papacy to be "The re-establishment of the Kingdom of Christ by peace in Christ." It was in the service of this mission that he introduced Christ the King Sunday as a challenge to the church to refocus its energies on their true ruler and away from unquestioning fidelity to earthly powers.<sup>1</sup>

Given the current climate of politics around the globe it seems that a Sunday celebrating the reign of Christ is a worthy topic. In particular, the rise of Christian Nationalism in America is an example of mixing the reign of governments with the reign of Christ.

Professor Paul Miller wrote about Christian Nationalism in a piece for the journal *Christianity Today* saying,

Christian nationalism is the belief that the American nation is defined by Christianity, and that the government should take active steps to keep it that way. Popularly, Christian nationalists assert that America is and must remain a "Christian nation"—not merely as an observation about American history, but as a prescriptive program for what America must continue to be in the future...

Christian nationalism is...a political ideology focused on the national identity of the United States. It includes a specific understanding of American history and American government that are, obviously, extrabiblical—an understanding that is contested by many historians and political scientists. Most importantly, Christian nationalism includes specific policy prescriptions that it claims are biblical but are, at best, extrapolations from biblical principles and, at worst, contradictory to them.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Jessica Davis The History of Christ the King Sunday The History of Christ the King Sunday](#)

Nov 23, 2021 Accessed November 22, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Miller. [What Is Christian Nationalism? - Christianity Today](#). Accessed November 22, 2024.

So, if nothing else, you may have learned a new term today. The thing is Christian Nationalism in various forms, and not called by that name in other eras, was really what Constantine did when he ruled the Roman Empire, where he used Christianity to dominate the masses. In many ways it was how Hitler vilified the Jewish people making it sound as if, because they had not accepted Christ as the Messiah, they were wrong and needed to be dealt with.

One can see traces of Christian nationalism in Europe as well as here in Canada as refugees and immigrants who come to our countries, often with a different faith tradition and different cultures than what we think we have become accustomed to, face racism, abuse, and intolerance. In is often outspoken Christians who use fear mongering to intimidate and fight for what they understand to be the true way the government should be handling things.

The thing is, even in Jesus' time as he stood before Pilot, charged with no crime at all, we see how politics and power were at work. When Pilot asked the people. "What charge to you bring against this man? They said, "If he hadn't been doing something evil, do you think we'd be here bothering you?" And the conversation continued between the Jewish temple authorities and Pilot as he says to them, "You take him. Judge him by your law." The Jews reply, "We're not allowed to kill anyone." (John 18:30-33) It was true, but it was also a way to take the problem, that was Jesus, out of their hands.

After the conversation, Pilot heads back into the palace and point-blank asks Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

And this is where the whole conversation about kingdom comes about. You see Pilot was never concerned with whether or not Jesus was a problem for him. He was just trying to keep control over the situation. It was a crowd control situation. I can tell you that the Jewish authorities never referred to Jesus as King of the Jews. In fact, they were pretty miffed when Pilot put that sign at the top of the cross on which Jesus was hung to die. They didn't want anyone getting any ideas about this Jesus guy who was nothing but trouble.

But why was Jesus trouble?

Well, it was because Jesus actually taught about a different kind of kingdom, even though in John he has only used those kingdom words once before and that was when he was speaking in private to Nicodemus who had come to see him in the cover of night. Yet no one could get a handle on what kingdom meant except for in earthly terms. They could not conceive of a kingdom based in the relationship of love that is the kingdom of God.

Even for us, it can be a stretch to think outside the box of what we understand of kingdom rule. We have so much human history that has displayed what power and dominion can do; how politics and influence shape countries around the globe, and only at times has

any of this been good for all and not just a few. We continue to struggle for equity and justice.

God's kingdom, the one that Jesus ushered in, is one of compassion, mercy, and relationship. A relationship of care and love, of forgiveness and hope. We really do not have the imagination to see and understand how the Reign of Christ is so deeply engrained in love, goodness, wisdom, truth, and use of power. Use of power that is not meant to dominant one into submission, but is rather an invitation to live in a way of love, goodness, wisdom, and truth, that truly has the power to change the course of history.

And let's take a look at that word truth, as there is a really important statement that Jesus makes in the midst of this interrogation. It begins with Pilot asking once again, "So, are you a king or not?"

Jesus answered, "You tell me. Because I am King, I was born and entered the world so that I could witness to the truth. Everyone who cares for truth, who has any feeling for the truth, recognizes my voice."

<sup>38</sup>Pilate said, "What is truth?" ...What is truth?

Truth was standing in front of Pilot and he did not recognize truth. Truth was how Jesus lived and showed us that compassion, justice, mercy, forgiveness, and love are the tenants of a life of truth. If Christian faith is heads in any other direction...thinks of itself in terms of them or us rather than we are in this together...then it is not truth.

Truth is standing up for the outcast, being present for the lonely and the sick. Truth says that all humanity is sacred and each person created in the image of God is valuable. Truth is not just for those we like because they think and act look like us. Jesus' truth is the divine extension of love and is grounded in a theology that God gives, not as the world gives.

God's kingdom is one of freedom, compassion, and joy. Freedom to love, not to harm. Freedom to accept that we are all children of God. Freedom because, in our humanness, when we are led astray or go wrong, we can experience forgiveness and stand up again to do better because we know better.

The kingdom of God is not a place, it is relational. This why Jesus can say that his kingdom is not of this world. But it sure can impact this world! As professor and preacher Karoline Lewis writes, "When kingdom is construed from the truth of relationship and not rule, from the truth of incarnation and not location, from the truth of love and not law, then Jesus as truth will ring true." <sup>3</sup>

Today may we bring the kingdom of God to earth through our love, justice, kindness, and mercy extended to all we encounter and those we influence. In Christ, through Christ, and with Christ. Amen

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<sup>3</sup> Karoline Lewis [Kings of Relationship - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#) Accessed November 22, 2024

## Prayers of the People

Holy One, the Source, Story and Spirit of love,  
We praise you for the signs of your reign among us:  
For hope overcoming despair, trust rising above hurt,  
love prevailing over hatred, and peace restoring harmony after discord.

God of hope beyond fear,  
We pray that you will comfort this broken world.  
May the vision of your peaceable kingdom take root  
in your church, in our families and our community,  
and in countries marked by violence and struggles for power.

God who mends the world,  
We pray for a world where differences are met with understanding,  
and everyone can find a place of dignity and respect.  
Shape our hearts with the kindness of your Spirit  
so that all our relationships honour each person as created in your image,  
and our actions demonstrate your healing intent.

God of life beyond death,  
We pray for all those who are grieving the loss of a loved one,  
the loss of hope, or the loss of a dream.  
Be present with each one living through a time of sadness or discouragement.  
Bring them comfort through your presence,  
and show us how to be good companions on the journey to renewed hope.

As we honour the reign of Christ this Sunday,  
we pray for the Church, his Body, living and working in the world.  
Send your Holy Spirit to bring renewed life and commitment  
to each congregation and parish.  
Enliven ecumenical action on needs in every community.  
Open minds and hearts that have experienced  
disagreement to mutual understanding.  
Refresh leaders and volunteers who have grown weary  
with a vision of the future you will create for us, with us and through us,  
in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour, who taught us to pray together:

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## Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen**

## Invitation to the offering

We offer our gifts in this moment to God that they might be used to bring hope, to bring healing, to bring new life to all people.

St. Andrew's uses all the money that we receive to support the ministry of God from this church and in community. Your gifts make a difference and this includes the ministry of online worship as well. If you are able to make a one-time donation or support this ministry on an ongoing basis your gift makes an impact. Please check us out at [standrewpres-tbay.ca](http://standrewpres-tbay.ca). There you can find various ways of giving from e-transfer to the online donate button that allows you to give by credit card. We are deeply grateful for your generosity.

## Hymn

### *Rejoice, the Lord is King*

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1. Rejoice, the Lord is King;  
your sovereign Lord adore;  
give thanks, O mortals, sing  
and triumph evermore.  
Lift up your heart; lift up your voice;  
rejoice, again I say, rejoice.
2. For Christ the Saviour reigns,  
the God of truth and love;  
when Jesus purged our stains,  
he took his seat above.  
lift up your heart; lift up your voice;  
rejoice, again I say, rejoice.
3. His reign can never fail;  
he rules o'er earth and heaven:  
the keys of death and hell  
are to our Saviour given.  
lift up your heart; lift up your voice;  
rejoice, again I say, rejoice.
4. He sits at God's right hand  
till all his foes submit  
and bow to his command  
and fall beneath his feet.  
lift up your heart; lift up your voice,  
rejoice, again I say, rejoice.
5. Rejoice in glorious hope,  
for Christ the Judge shall come  
and take the faithful up  
to their external home.  
we soon shall hear the archangel's voice;  
the trump of God shall sound; rejoice.

Words and Music: public domain

## Benediction

Beloved, may God bless you with the wisdom  
to discern the truth as you follow Christ,  
who testifies to the truth by embodying Love in all times and in all places.

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, August 2024. [Discipleship Ministries | Reign of Christ Sunday, Year B - Liturgical...](#)

Go now in peace.

Bring the good news of God's eternal love,  
the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit to all you meet.

[Ministry Matters™ | Worship Connection: November 24, 2024](#)