



We are
Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge
Knox Didsbury Pastoral Charge
of the United Church of Canada
Sunday November 21st, 2021
Minister: Rev. Tammy Allan
Musician today: (Olds /Knox)



Our mission statements:
Olds: A Family of Faith, Spiritually Motivated, Welcoming and Caring
Sundre: Believing, Caring, Sharing
Knox Didsbury: Caring, Sharing, Believing

As we worship we gratefully acknowledge that our churches are all on the ancient and traditional lands of The Blackfoot Nation, the people of the Treaty 7, and of Metis Region 3. May we cherish and care for these lands and the people, just as those who came before us have done.

Prelude

Announcements

Nov. 21 Meeting in Olds (information re the Property Learning Group)
UCW Christmas luncheon – December 1; rsvp and proof of vaccine or negative test required
Coffee time – Tuesday at 10:00, zoom link in Friday's email

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Lighting the Christ Candle

We gather to worship, remembering Christ's life and ministry, and the life we are called to live.

May this light remind us of the one who brought peace out of chaos, and hope out of despair. Thanks be to God!

Call to Worship

We come to this time of worship to be refreshed and renewed in God's presence.

We come to be calmed and comforted by the Spirit.

We come to be stirred by Christ's message for us.

All are welcome to this time of worship.

Let us gather to praise the God of peace and justice.

Hymn VU 218 We Praise You, O God

Opening Prayer

God, you are the source of all things. You are the beginning and the end. You are the great “I am.” We ask for your wisdom and your compassion. Guide us, love us, we pray. Teach us to be compassionate and wise, too. We pray as followers of Jesus, who lived for justice and truth. Amen.

Time with Children The Church Year...Jeopardy style...

1. First season of the church year?
2. Second season?
3. 3rd
4. 4th?
5. 5th?
6. The longest season?

Hymn VU 365 Jesus Loves Me

Scripture John 18:33-37

On this, the last Sunday of the church year, we hear a piece of the story that occurs just prior to the crucifixion of Jesus, where Jesus is taken to stand before Pilate.

33 Then Pilate entered the headquarters* again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ 34 Jesus answered, ‘Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?’ 35 Pilate replied, ‘I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?’ 36 Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.’ 37 Pilate asked him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.’

Response to the Scripture Reading

This is the witness of the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

I have a friend who reminds me, when I have a birthday, that we’ve made another trip around the sun.

Well, in church life, we have done so too. Another year of the church calendar has gone by. This is the last Sunday of the Christian church year.

In a few days, the church world will begin to prepare for the birth...and the coming of God in Jesus. Never mind that the secular world started getting ready weeks ago...the Halloween candy wasn’t even off the shelves before Christmas things began to appear.

I've come to appreciate the idea that we should at least wait until after Remembrance Day to start displaying Christmas. I had one minister, before I became one myself, who fiercely insisted that Christmas wasn't until Dec. 24-25th; and that for the 4 weeks before, all things Christmas should not be allowed – especially Christmas carols in church. Advent hymns only.

It didn't ever go over well. I learned a lot from him...sometimes what not to do. And he and I could agree to disagree on things like that.

Now...remember the quiz earlier – we are, today, still in “ordinary church time.” Advent begins next week. And today, the last of Sunday in ordinary time, is what is known in the church as “Reign of Christ” Sunday, or “Christ the King” Sunday.

I've never been one for the language that lifts up Christ as “King” – for me, that lifts up an image that connotes a kind of power that was in direct contrast to who Jesus was. He certainly wasn't about that kind of power – a power that exalts itself over others. His power was based in lifting up the poor, the marginalized, the lowest and least, and giving them love and acceptance in a world that did anything but. And yet, Jesus' love wasn't exclusive to the poor and the lowly – his was a love for all.

In Jesus eyes, all people, no matter their status or lack there of, were seen as worthy of the love of God.

Today's scripture reading locates us at the end of Jesus' life – as he comes before Pilate.

Pilate – as one commentary says –

“represents an empire whose foundation is might, whose reality is power, whose leader is a god (small 'g' god). Jesus (on the other hand) offers the vision of a different realm, one which is grounded in seeming powerlessness, whose leader is a servant.”

Seasons of the Spirit, SeasonsFUSION Season of Creation, Pentecost 2, 2021, pg. 154.

Note that this timeline for this passage is a period when the people were looking for a political leader – a king - that would bring destruction on those who were persecuting them. And instead, we find Jesus, as a prisoner, standing before Pilate, arrested because he has such influence over the people – influence that teaches them not to take up arms and fight, but to turn the other cheek, to seek peace.

We hear today just a small portion of the events that lead up to Jesus' crucifixion – in particular this conversation between Jesus and Pilate, where Pilate seems to be engaging in a ploy to place the blame for what's happening to Jesus anywhere but upon himself, upon Pilate. As you read more of this story, beyond what we heard today, you get a sense that Pilate really didn't want this responsibility to decide what should happen to Jesus. Our Gathering Magazine resource for this week refers to the film Jesus Christ Superstar, - the Live Concert version from 2018, and that reference reminded me of how that story portrays Pilate – as one who approaches this moment in his own rule with fear...he'd like anyone else to make the decision that needs to be made.

Its this part of the story that has, over our Christian history, contributed to the misconceived idea that "Jews" are responsible for Jesus' death. John's gospel is arguably the worst of the 4 gospels for naming "the Jews" in general, as those who were responsible for Jesus' death, not a small group of scribes and Pharisees that saw him as a threat to their power, and their control over the systems of their society.

Let's remember that Jesus, himself, was a Jew.

But we've seen this kind of generalization of blame in our own time. September 11, 2001, cannot be blamed on Muslims anymore than the Jews can be blamed for Jesus' death. It's a blatant misconception that Muslims are to be held responsible for the evil perpetrated by a few extremists. Even Christianity has extremist's who go beyond what we would see as just or right behaviour.

This behaviour of placing blame with a broad brush like that is not a new thing, and it's not at all helpful. It creates divisiveness, fear, and hatred.

In today's passage, Pilate keeps asking Jesus if he's a king...and did you notice that Jesus never really answers the question? Instead he speaks those words "For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.'

It's not about social status or political power for Jesus. Its not about worldly power and wealth...Jesus finds his power in truth and in love, he finds his realm –his kingdom if you will, in a world of justice and peace. That isn't Pilate's world, but it is in a world to come, a world that Jesus came to bring about.

Does Jesus speak of a world totally beyond the earthly world - the world after life on earth? Perhaps. But perhaps, he speaks of a world on earth, a world of peace and justice. A world where all people, no matter what creed or custom, faith or none, are living in harmony and truth. I believe that is a world that Jesus not only came to bring about, but that it is a world that people of faith – many faiths, are still striving to make real.

Perhaps that's the same world Martin Luther King spoke of in his great "I Have a Dream" speech.

Perhaps that's the world where people in British Columbia are opening their doors to complete strangers, offering them a place of sanctuary, in the midst of the chaos of floods and mud slides.

Perhaps it's the world where young men are taking out their fishing boats and saving pets and livestock for farmers they've never met; or a world where a Seik temple has opened its doors and its kitchens to provide shelter and food for anyone who needs it.

Perhaps it's a world where refugees are finding new beginnings in the safety of our country, where their children are finding places of learning and friendship.

The world that Jesus was speaking of in this passage - perhaps is a world that opens its immigration processes up to expediate safe passage and secure homes for the translators whose lives are at risk if they stay in Afghanistan.

Closer to home, perhaps the world Jesus spoke of is a world where families have enough to eat each day, where Canadians living on reserves don't have to boil their water before its safe to drink; where men and women can walk down the streets of their cities –our cities - with head coverings on, unafraid of harassment and abuse.

We have a role to play in building that vision of a world of peace and justice that Jesus had...and as people of faith, as followers of the way of Jesus, that is indeed our call – we speak it in the New Creed, one of our official statements of faith – that we are called "to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil."

I know that sometimes it feels like its an overwhelming task, that of following in the way of Jesus, in our little part of the world.

Yet, think of the things we CAN do:

- like teaching our children and grandchildren what it means to live in peace and harmony, with our neighbours, both near and far;

- like educating ourselves about the traditions and cultural richness of our country, that we might come to be more understanding and compassionate towards one another;

- like continuing to be active politically active citizens, letting our political leaders know what's important to us, when it comes to issues of justice and peace;

-like taking a stand when we are hear things that are disparaging or racist in places like our coffee circles and community gatherings – taking the courage to stand for what is right – what is, as the scripture speaks of – truth.

Yes, truth. For as followers of the way of Jesus – we are indeed called to live in truth – with all of God’s creation. As we go into the world this week, may we be guided by God’s truth – that all are loved, all are equally valued, and all are welcome in the realm of God – here on this earth, and beyond.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn VU 356 Seek Ye First the Kingdom

This Week’s Minute for Mission

Offertory Music VU 538 For the Gift of Creation

Offertory Prayer

With these gifts we share today, we express a small portion of our love for you, O God, and for our neighbours, near and far. Take what we offer, and use it to help fill the world with your abundant goodness and love. Amen.

Prayers for the Day

God of all time and space, you are always present with us. You are in our world, in our lives, and for this truth we are grateful.

We lift to you the concerns of our world,
For places of wrong and hurt, for times of worry and uncertainty...we think of the many in our communities who are struggling economically, facing job loss or reduction in work.

We pray for those who struggle with life – who do not know which way to turn, or what tomorrow will bring. We think of those with illness, those awaiting test results or surgeries, those undergoing treatments.

We pray that your presence will be known in places of power and authority, challenging and transforming those who seek to exert their power in the world. We pray for those places where political corruption leads to violence and oppression.

We ask, O God, that we may be filled with your spirit of love and justice, empower us with your hopes and dreams for a world of peace and justice, where people can live free from fear and oppression, where your truth and your peace will prevail.

This week, O God, we lift up our brothers and sisters to the west – as flooding and mudslides have created havoc. We pray for people stranded away from home, for those caught in the chaos, that their trauma be healed, for those emergency personnel, and those workers on the ground trying to restore some sense of order in the chaos.

Hear us, O God, as we lift these prayers to you, and the prayers of our hearts...as we take a moment in silence to name our deep hopes, joys, and concerns....

O God, we join our voices in the words that Jesus taught us to pray...Our Father....

The 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

Hymn VU 359 He Came Singing Love

A Blessing for Today

Let us leave this time of worship, seeking to be agents of peace and love in the world.

**May we continue to grow in faith, as we seek to live the way of Jesus.
Amen.**

Choral Benediction MV 224 May the God of Peace

Postlude

Thank you for taking time to be part of the Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge and Knox (Didsbury) Pastoral Charge worship experience.

Olds and Didsbury alternate hosting live worship each week, while live-streaming to the other church. You are welcome to attend either location at 9:30. Sundre continues to have in- person worship at 1:30. All are welcome there as well.

The bulletin and sermon will continue to be posted to the websites, for those who are unable to join us. Messages will also be posted to the Facebook Page, Olds and Sundre United Churches.

Each week, via email, there will be updates and announcements. If you'd like to receive those emails, please contact your church office and ask to be included.

Questions? Wish to financially support our ministries? To Contact us:

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