

Immanuel United Church
November 20, 2022
Reign of Christ Sunday

Welcome & Announcements

Centering Music

Lighting the Candle and Acknowledgements

Call to Worship:

God's words became a person
And lived among us.

**We thank God for being part of Jesus,
And pray that we may live in Jesus' light.**

God's words became a person and lived among us
And was a servant.

**O God, make us Jesus' followers
So that we may serve one another.**

God's word became a person who lived,
died, and is alive among us now.

**This is true,
And we are all invited into Jesus' ministry on earth.
Recreate us in your likeness.
Amen.**

Hymn: MV#7 Gather Us in, Ground us in You (x3)

Prayer Seeking Reconciliation and Words of Assurance:

Loving God,

We confess we have given idols power over us,
The idols of power and wealth, fame and security.

We confess we have fallen into the ways of this world
And have forgotten our kindred in Christ.

We have lost sight of the reign of God here on earth,
And instead have allowed the idols of the world

To rule over us.

Forgive us.

Call us into Your reign,

To declare You are the one who has power over us

Because Your power is love.

Call us to love our neighbours as ourselves,

And to work for justice, show mercy, and love one another

In the name of Christ Jesus.

(silent prayer and reflection)

Words of Assurance

Jesus came to us not to reign as a king over us,
but to serve us,

and to show us the way of God is the way of love.

Jesus said the first would be last and the last would be first.

Jesus called us to become humble and serve one another,
and that the most important commandment
was to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

This is the way of our Sovereign.

Go, knowing you are forgiven,
and love and serve one another,
especially our neighbors in need,
as Christ serves us. Amen.

Introduction

On this Sunday called the Reign of Christ Sunday,

The last Sunday in Ordinary Time,

We will celebrate by going through the life of Christ.

So let us hear the story,

And may we find the words

We need to hear this day

And for all of our days.

Come, let us celebrate.

Bethlehem

Jesus is born.

He was born in Bethlehem,
A little town six miles to the south of Jerusalem.

The name Bethlehem means
“House of bread.”

Here, in the house of bread
The word of life became human
And began his life among us.

The word which God
Had spoken through prophets,
The word of love, holiness, service and mercy
Became human.

As much as God could be God in human flesh,
This happened in Jesus.

In Jesus, the holy faces disease, hunger,
Temptation and ignorance.

However, in Jesus,
God’s love is not limited,
Encompassing all.

By Jesus’ birth,
God makes all human birth
Special, important, sacred.

Hymn: VU#76 See Amid the Winters Snow (v.1, 2, 5)

Nazareth

After the birth of Jesus,
The Holy Family fled as refugees to Egypt.

The reason for their flight:
To escape the cruelty of King Herod.

After Herod died,
The family moved back to Palestine,
To the little town of Nazareth.
There, Joseph supported his little family

As a carpenter.
As far as we know,
Jesus only ever traveled out of Nazareth once
During his childhood.
This trip took him to Jerusalem
For the Passover.
He was 12 at the time.
It was his bar mitzvah.
After a while,
Mary and Joseph began the journey home.
While on the road with their traveling companions,
They realize that in the hustle and bustle of
The travelling crowd,
They were missing Jesus.
So they had to turn around
To find him.
Mary was, with good reason,
Was a little miffed,
Mostly because Jesus hadn't told
Them that he wanted to stay.
Understandable, no?
It seems likely that Joseph
Died before his family was full grown.
This meant that Jesus had to assume
Both the emotional and material support
For his mother and younger siblings.
In Nazareth, Jesus learned about life –
About earning a living,
About saving money and giving money,
About sad times,
And about happy times.

The Jordan River

John the Baptist was a cousin of Jesus.
He had spent many years in a monastic community

Near the Dead Sea.
Now he had come to preach to all who would listen.
John preached that all should
Seek forgiveness and be baptised.
Baptism, as it was believed at the time,
Was only for Gentiles, the non-Jewish people.
However, John said that the Jews and the Gentiles
All needed to turn to God.
One day, Jesus went to hear John and
Asked to be baptized.
This was Jesus' way of showing
That he stands with us even in our wrongs,
Even when we are in deep trouble.
At his baptism,
Jesus hears God call him Son.
Jesus hears God affirm:
"You are my beloved Son,
In whom we are well pleased."

At our baptism,
We also hear God call us beloved.
At his baptism,
Jesus was equipped by the Holy Spirit
For the work he was to do.
At our baptism,
The Holy Spirit comes to us
And promises that God's love will
Be with us always.

Hymn: VU#509 I, the Lord of Sea and Sky

The Judean Wilderness

After Jesus' baptism,
Jesus went into the Judean wilderness
In order to be alone

And to contemplate what it meant
To be the Child of God
And what God was calling him to do.
Jesus knew that he was the one
Who was to bring God's desires to the world.
How would he do this?
He is tempted to win people in the kingdom
By giving them free bread.
He answered this temptation by
Using words of scripture that said:
"no one can live by bread alone."
Humans need a spiritual dimension to life.

In his second temptation,
He thinks about using sensationalism,
Impressing people with stunts.
He answers the tempter
By saying it is wrong to test God!
It is wrong to win people to God
By using attention grabbing stunts.
The tempter offers a third temptation...
For Jesus to use force.
Perhaps Jesus could raise an army
And compel people to follow him.
Jesus knew that forced followers
Are never true followers.
Jesus responds:
"we shall worship God
And serve God only."
In other words,
We must trust in God
Without trying to use power and force
To get people to see God.

After these temptations,

Jesus was even more firm
In his resolve to bring God's presence
Through love and reconciliation.
No matter what it took,
Even death on a cross,
Jesus would win people through love.

Prayer:

**Thanks be to you, Jesus,
For all the benefits which you have given to us,
For all the pains and insults you have borne for us.
Oh, merciful redeemer,
Friend and sibling,
May we know you more clearly,
Love you more dearly,
And follow you more nearly. Amen**

(prayer adapted from one written by St. Richard, 1197-1253)

The Sea of Galilee

At his baptism, Jesus knows who he is.
Through his temptations,
He finds out how to bring about God's reign.
However, Jesus still needs help in finding his mission.
Over the beginning of his ministry,
Jesus taps the shoulders of 12 people
Who would join him in his massive job of Shalom:
God's peace.
They are common, everyday people,
From all walks of life.
One disciple,
Judah, was a political revolutionary,
Another,
Matthew worked for the hated Roman government
As a tax collector.
Several of the disciples were fishermen –

Simon, Peter, Peter's brother Andrew,
James and John.
Also there were Phillip, Bartholomew,
Thomas, another James, Simon
And Judas Iscariot.
Luke's gospel mentions
That there were women who were also
Following Jesus as disciples.
Mary Magadlene,
Joanna,
And Susanna,
Among "Many others"
We can add ourselves to the list,
As we are called to be disciples
In this day and age.

Hymn: VU#641 Lord Jesus, You Shall be my Song

The City of Capernaum

The preaching and the healing ministries of Jesus
Took place mainly in and around
A small Galilean City called Capernaum.
Mark's gospel,
Which is the oldest,
Summarizes the message of Jesus
In these words:
"After John had been committed to prison,
Jesus came to Galilee announcing the good news
About God and saying
"the time has come, and the Kingdom of God is near.
Turn away from your sin,
And believe the good news."
It was good news for all people –
For the poor, the rich, the sick and the well,
The young and the old, the men and the women.

It was news about building life
On the strong foundation of God's love.
It was news about the importance
Of the individual
And about God offering forgiveness.
It was good news about caring
For those by the side
Of the road who are hurt.
It was good news about God's peace within us.
It was good news that we are made whole,
And God wants the world to be whole.
It was good news that God will never give up on us.
God is with us.
In his first sermon in Nazareth,
Jesus gives the good news this way:

Scripture: Luke 4: 16-21

¹⁶ When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set free those who are oppressed,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Hymn: VU#684 Make Me a Channel of Your Peace

Jerusalem

Palm Sunday,
The first day of the last week.
Jesus is staying at the home of his friends,
Mary, Martha, and Lazarus
In Bethany.
In the morning,
With his disciples and other Passover pilgrims,
Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem.
As they walk,
Crowds of Galileans pilgrims hail
Jesus as Messiah.
They cry out
“Blessed is the One who comes
In the name of the Lord.”

The first place Jesus goes
Is the temple.
He is appalled at what he sees
Happening in the court of the Gentiles –
The money changers making huge profits
By changing Roman money into Temple currency.
There are merchants selling sacrificial doves
And other offerings,
And charging a huge mark up.
People are buying from these merchants
Because they knew the offerings would pass
The scrutiny of the temple priests.
The booths for selling belonged to Annas,
The high priest.
He makes the biggest profit.
It's exploitation in the name of God.

It happens in the court of the Gentiles,
Where the authorities think
It doesn't matter.
Jesus is filled with righteous anger.
He tosses tables, upsetting birds and products,
Driving out the merchants and the money changers.
While doing this he quotes
The prophet Isaiah saying
"My temple will be called
A house of prayer for all nations."
In other words,
Just because this exploitation is not taking place
In the court of the Jews does not mean it is right.
God wants justice for all people.

Choir Anthem Come Walk with Me

Jerusalem

All week,
Jesus teaches in the court of the temple.
Before Passover it was the custom
Of the Jewish people to discuss
And ask questions about their faith,
It was a busy time for the rabbis.

On the fifth day of the week of Passover,
Jesus gathered with his disciples
To celebrate this holy Jewish meal.
It was at Passover that a rabbi would talk
Things over with his disciples.
Before the meal began,
The custom was for one of the group
To wash the feet of the others.
John's gospel says none of the disciples would do this:
Each thought that this lowly service was beneath them.

So it was Jesus who washed the feet of the disciples,
Saying: "I, your leader and teacher,
Have just washed your feet.
You, then, should wash one another's feet."

The supper continues probably
In the manner of the Jewish Seder.
During the meal, when it came time
For the drinking of the third cup,
Jesus makes some changes in the Seder ritual.
He gives the bread and the wine new meaning.

He said of the bread:
"this is my body."
Before we go further,
I want to give the meaning of sacrament.
It is something,
Usually a very ordinary thing,
Which has acquired a meaning far
Beyond the reality of it.
It is a sign, that is,
It points to something larger
And greater than itself.
So the bread,
The simple bread that Jesus held,
Baked by ordinary hands,
Brought to the table by ordinary people,
Points us to the meal that feeds us
For the journey that we take toward God

So Jesus said of the bread:
This is my body.
He took the cup, saying:
This cup is the new covenant made
In my blood shed for you."

In Jewish tradition,
This third cup of wine at the Seder meal
Was the most important
Of the blessing,
And is the “cup of redemption”
Because it represented the blood of the lamb
That the Israelites used on the doorframes
Of their houses to keep safe as God passed over.

Jesus is telling the disciples:
“By my life and my death,
I have helped to create a new relationship
Between yourselves and God.
Now you know God is your friend;
And with or without me,
Know that God loves you.”
What we are offered is the very same thing
As we strive to follow the ministry
That Jesus modelled for us,
And as we seek to live out the love
That Jesus showed.

Hymn: VU#341 Fairest Lord Jesus (v.1 only)

Scripture: Luke 23: 33-49

³³ When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus^[a] there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [[³⁴ Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”]]^[b] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. ³⁵ And the people stood by watching, but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah^[c] of God, his chosen one!” ³⁶ The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine ³⁷ and saying, “If you are the

King of the Jews, save yourself!”³⁸ There was also an inscription over him,^[d] “This is the King of the Jews.”

³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding^[e] him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah?^[f] Save yourself and us!”⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?”⁴¹ And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.”⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come in^[g] your kingdom.”⁴³ He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁴ It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land^[h] until three in the afternoon,⁴⁵ while the sun’s light failed,^[i] and the curtain of the temple was torn in two.⁴⁶ Then Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I com mend my spirit.” Having said this, he breathed his last.⁴⁷ When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, “Certainly this man was innocent.”^[j]⁴⁸ And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts.⁴⁹ But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching these things.

Jerusalem

In the taunts of the priests and the soldiers,
There seems to be a bitter truth.
If Jesus was indeed King of the Jews
And God’s chosen one,
What was he doing being crucified on a cross?

The bitterness of their jibes
Sank deep into the soul of Jesus.

Could his life have been wasted?
The Gospels of Mark and Matthew say that in his pain
Jesus cries out:
“My God, why have you forsaken me?”

Still, it was not defeat.
On the cross, Jesus gave
A revelation of what he had said
To his disciples...
“the one who tries to save his life
Is the one who loses it;
The person who gives their life to God
Will save it.”

That is the heart of the Christian gospel.
It takes work to bring about
God’s desire for the world.
Out of what seems like death and hopelessness,
God can bring life and love.

Hymn: VU#152 There is a Green Hill Far Away

At the Tomb

“On the third day, he arose from the grave.”
On the way to the tomb,
Mary Magdelene, Mary Mother of James,
And Salome were filled with grief.
Once there, they wondered who might roll
The stone away for them
So they could enter the tomb
And anoint Jesus’ body as per tradition.
In the midst of their wondering,
They were shocked and frightened to find
That the stone had already been rolled away.
No one person would have been able

To move the stone,
It had to be a holy mystery moment.

We can't explain how this whole resurrection thing happens.
All we can do every Easter
Is to stand like the women,
Quiet and still in the mystery,
And then jubilant with gladness
At the reality of what had happened.
The Gospel accounts each differ in the details
Of the resurrection.
And that doesn't matter,
As the real witness to the gospel
Isn't found in the details,
But rather in the lives of the disciples
Then and now.
Power was let loose,
Changes took place,
And only the resurrection could account
For those shifts.

Hymn: VU#155 Jesus Christ is Risen today

Offering

Offertory: MV#191 **What Can I Do?**

Offering Prayer

Prayer of the Community & The Prayer of Jesus

Hymn: VU#211 Crown Him with Many Crowns

Commissioning and Benediction