

Worship Resources - *Upside Down* - https://youtu.be/QhPR_tHyUtY

19th Sunday of Pentecost, Year A,

11th October, 2020

Philippians 4:1-9 CEV / Matthew 22:1-14 CEV

Intro/Prelude - *En Medio De La Vida (You Are The God Within Life)*

played by church musician Annie Center

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NIJWT3FnSs&feature=youtu.be>

I'm glad to welcome you to online worship with Olympic View Community Church. We seek to welcome all of God's children to join us in bearing witness to the radically transforming power of God's love.

Our tradition at Olympic View is to begin our service greeting and wishing each other peace. In our troubled world of today, let's take a few moments as we listen to this prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, and think how we can be a channel of God's peace in our own lives.

Reflection video *Make Me A Channel of Your Peace*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihhvm6eLWZI&feature=youtu.be>

Invocation

Gracious God, in love You open wide the doors and welcome us into Your presence—saints and sinners alike. You spread a table before us, filled with the richest fare— a feast of love and mercy for the body and soul.

We come with joy to meet You here, to eat and drink at Your table, to taste and see Your goodness, to celebrate Your grace and mercy in our lives.

May Your Spirit inspire our praise and thanksgiving, our prayers and petitions as we worship together in Your presence. In the name of Jesus Christ, our host and Lord, **Amen.**

We light a candle today to represent the Spirit burning within us, and among us, guiding our time together. (light candle) Amen.

In our reading from the Philippians this morning, Paul offers words of wisdom in how to live a faithful life. As we listen to these words, let's think what our focus in our own lives is, and how we might act differently.

Epistle Reading

Philippians 4:1-9 CEV

Dear friends, I love you and long to see you. Please keep on being faithful to the Lord. You are my pride and joy.

Euodia and Syntyche, you belong to the Lord, so I beg you to stop arguing with each other.

And, my true partner,^[a] I ask you to help them. These women have worked together with me and with Clement and with the others in spreading the good news. Their names are now written in the book of life.

Always be glad because of the Lord! I will say it again: Be glad.

Always be gentle with others. The Lord will soon be here.

Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything. With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God.

Then, because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way

Finally, my friends, keep your minds on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly, and proper. Don't ever stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile and worthy of praise.

You know the teachings I gave you, and you know what you heard me say and saw me do. So follow my example. And God, who gives peace, will be with you

Scripture Video

Philippians 4:1-9 |

Paul Encourages The Lord's Followers

Lectionary bible reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvGTcnFNd10&t=6s>

A Time of Prayer

Today we come together as a community to share together our joys and concerns, and lift them to God in prayer. If you would like to share a specific request to be included in our communal prayer time, please leave a comment in the video below, or email myself at: vicarglenn@gmail.com, and I'll make sure to include that request in next week's service, as well as send a prayer chain email, if you would like.

Joys and Concerns

This morning, let's remember Matthew Schultz as he prepares to begin chemotherapy for his ongoing condition.

Let's also remember Sylvia Hershberger's mother Rose, who had surgery to repair a broken hip and clavicle this week.

We also express joy in Goldie Barnes' milestone of her 80th birthday and the efforts of friends and family to make it truly a blessed event.

We're also thankful for the safe travels of Annie Center, and the opportunities that afforded.

Finally, let's keep Kathy and Roger Edmark in our prayers as they travel back to Japan today.

Let's bring these concerns and others in our lives to God together in prayer.

Pastoral Prayer

God, we come into Your presence with praise and thanksgiving for Your faithful love.

Your love never fails—not even we turn away from You: when we ignore Your invitation, or desert You for gods of our own making. Even then You do not abandon us, but reach out—again and again—inviting us back into relationship once more. As You welcome us, so You welcome our prayers. We bring them to You with confidence, knowing that You will hear and answer.

We pray for the world You created, and the people who share it with us:

- for countries caught up in war or violent conflict,
- for regions of the world struggling with increased cases of COVID-19,
- for those whose homes and lives are threatened by natural disaster; For these and all the other areas in our world where there is need and despair,

We pray for our country and for its people:

- for our government leaders, federal and local,
- for our judicial system, police forces and military,
- for our cities, towns, and rural communities,
- for employers and employees, for young and old,

For all who are part of this great country,

We pray for our local community—the people of this city/town,

- for those who are unemployed,
- for those in prison,
- for those who are hungry,
- for those who are alone and afraid, For all our neighbours, both known and unknown to us,

We pray for this congregation—our brothers and sisters in Christ,

- for those who are ill. or whose loved ones are ill,
- for those who are anxious about the future,
- for those struggling with their faith,
- for those who minister among us,

For all Your people in this place,

Pour out Your Spirit on us! Fix our hearts and minds on what is true and honourable and right. Give us the joy and peace that comes from knowing and doing Your will.

Keep us faithful to the call we have received in Christ Jesus, our Lord, extending Your loving invitation to the world around us. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Our gospel lesson this morning, Jesus tells the parable of a vengeful king. As we listen to these words from Matthew, let's think about the rulers of our time, and how we work to serve the kin-dom not of this world.

Gospel Lesson Matthew 22:1-14 CEV

Once again Jesus used stories to teach the people:

The kingdom of heaven is like what happened when a king gave a wedding banquet for his son.

The king sent some servants to tell the invited guests to come to the banquet, but the guests refused.

He sent other servants to say to the guests, "The banquet is ready! My cattle and prize calves have all been prepared. Everything is ready. Come to the banquet!"

But the guests did not pay any attention. Some of them left for their farms, and some went to their places of business.

Others grabbed the servants, then beat them up and killed them.

This made the king so furious that he sent an army to kill those murderers and burn down their city.

Then he said to the servants, "It is time for the wedding banquet, and the invited guests don't deserve to come.

Go out to the street corners and tell everyone you meet to come to the banquet."

They went out on the streets and brought in everyone they could find, good and bad alike. And the banquet room was filled with guests.

When the king went in to meet the guests, he found that one of them wasn't wearing the right kind of clothes for the wedding.

The king asked, "Friend, why didn't you wear proper clothes for the wedding?" But the guest had no excuse.

So the king gave orders for that person to be tied hand and foot and to be thrown outside into the dark. That's where people will cry and grit their teeth in pain.

Many are invited, but only a few are chosen.

Scripture Video **Matthew 22:1-14** ***The Great Banquet***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wneBmkLxZm8&list=PLVKEc-OFRIx8b-JqJaKBd4rip9n5CFI8K&index=11>

Message – *Upside Down*

There's a story of the pastor giving a children's sermon, where every week the children anticipate him making a new point about Jesus. This particular week he begins by holding up a stuffed squirrel and asking, "Boys and girls, do you know what this is?" Silence. The pastor asks again. Silence. Finally, one little boy is bold enough to shyly raise his hand and offer, "Gee, I know I'm supposed to say Jesus, but it sure looks like a squirrel to me." How much do we do the same thing, try to make every parable we hear be about God or Jesus as the main character? Too often when we do this, we then need to somehow make the moral of that story fit the character traits of God, even when the actions portrayed seem so far from the loving God we come to worship. What would happen if we look to find God in the lesser characters? If we cease to automatically assume the king or rich landowner is God or Jesus?

Today's scripture is a prime example of this. Traditional interpretation over the years makes this parable about God as the rich king, coming down hard on the wedding guests for not showing up, murdering them, in fact. Then when new guests are selected, one who has not brought out his best clothes, or has chosen not to wear the wedding tunic provided, is banished and left to die by the "gnashing of teeth" of the wild beasts. Does this sound like the kind and just God we usually think of? Theologians over the years have tried their best to make this parable fit with God as the king. Preachers talk about the first wedding guests being the Pharisees and temple authorities of Jesus day who fail to heed the call of Jesus and are destroyed. Another way of approaching it is to focus on the one without the wedding clothes as someone who refuses to accept Christ, and is cast out. But what if we consider the possibility of God in this parable being the very one who refuses to give in, to wear the garment provided for him. What if God, incarnated in Jesus, is the one cast out to suffer the "gnashing of teeth?" How does that change our perspective on this parable?

Well, for starters, we would need to reevaluate the conception we often have of God as the triumphant king and ruler, in favor of the view that Isaiah 53 provides. In that scripture, we hear of the "suffering servant", one who was "despised and rejected by mankind...oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth." Sounds a lot like the Jesus we hear in Matthew's gospel, doesn't it?

Theologian Marty Aiken remarks that instead of seeing the king as making Jesus' audience think of God, he argues that this king would have sparked in Jesus' audience thoughts of kings much closer to their situation in history, namely, the Herods, especially the first King Herod. Drawing from historical sources such as Josephus, Aiken shows how the Herods actually behaved in ways very similar to the king in this parable. With a monarch so brutally dictatorial, does Jesus really mean for us to think of divine kingship with this parable instead of the kind of petty dictators such as the Herods who so litter human history with victims? We are presented with a brutal, tyrannical king doling out terroristic punishment on his subject, particularly on the one who quietly resists, without saying a word in his own defense.

Jesus himself responds with silence in Matthew more than in any of the other gospels. For example, Matthew 26:62-63: "The high priest stood up and said, 'Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?' But Jesus was silent." And Matthew 27:11-14: "Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus said, 'You say so.' But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, 'Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?' But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed." What has happened to that man in the parable – is what is about to happen to Jesus. Jesus ends up looking much more like the guy at the end of the story than the king at the outset. Yes, we started by hearing the king as God, but by the end of the story, as disciples of the crucified Christ, we are generally more sympathetic to the guy thrown out of the party. What do you think? Is this a case like with the Children's Sermon of expecting to see Jesus but instead seeing a squirrel? Is it a case, in other words, of expecting to see God when we hear "king" but Jesus instead giving us something very different?

I think that it is, and I've become increasingly convinced that this is the only way to take seriously all the terrible details about how this king behaves. Sometimes a king is simply a king. In fact, in the human world of authority, this is the king we expect to find because all human reigns are based on the authority of violence. Even at "peaceful times," the "peace" is maintained through the threat of an army or police force. We can see the king in this parable as the tyrant he is, a king who rules with the worst kind of brutality and terrorism, often under the guise of "law and order."

But what about the introduction Jesus gives us at the beginning of the parable, introducing this story as an example of the kin-dom of heaven? Is that image to be compared to the suffering servant exemplified in the man without wedding clothes?

If that's the case, then we need to look on the king and his kin-dom as the example of the way in which our earthly, violence-based authority is on display. If that's the case, it would follow that the kin-dom of heaven looks more like the man who stands silently before him at the end of the parable. In short, it looks like what happened to Jesus when he stood silently in the face of his accusers and let them throw him out into the darkness of death.

But in examining this concept of the kin-dom of heaven referenced by Jesus in this parable, I think it's important to reflect on another scripture from this gospel, especially when trying to understand the so-called parables of judgment, like the one in this morning's Gospel. In Matthew 11, verse 12, Jesus says, "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kin-dom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it."

Jesus makes it clear how to identify the kin-dom of heaven. Human, earthly kin-doms operate by the threat or use of force; they dish out the violence. But Jesus here is telling us straight out that the kin-dom of heaven is about suffering the violence instead of dishing it out. It believes steadfastly, in other words, in the power of love and forgiveness as the greatest powers on earth. So, if we keep this clue in mind from the first part of the Gospel, it helps understand these strange parables at the end of Gospel, which Jesus tells in Jerusalem just as he himself is about to suffer their violence in love and forgiveness.

This morning's gospel about the violent king and the man not dressed in a wedding garment is about the collision of a typical earthly kin-dom and the kin-dom of heaven. So does this mean we are bound to the same fate as the guest without wedding clothes, or worse yet, the same fate as Jesus? Probably not. But we can expect suffering and trials for standing up to this country and this world's violent ways.

The Book of Acts shows us the apostles spending quite a bit of time in prison for standing up for God's way of love and forgiveness and healing. Paul, in our reading from Philippians today, was written in prison as well. He tells us in our reading today to rejoice in the Lord, but to also be in the same mind as well. And where do we see the kin-dom of heaven today?

We see it in those who step out of their comfort zone and take the risk of standing against the evil, violent ways of the kin-doms and empires of our day, those who choose to not go with the flow of the ways of society that are unjust, or promote violence as a solution and means of control. Those who choose not to go along with what culture says is the norm, when those practices cause the hurt and oppression of

others. But even though we may put ourselves at risk, we have the promise of a different kind of banquet, with one who has suffered and died, and succeeded in overcoming the violence of the world through the love and peace of the resurrection.

I pray that we all choose to be the ones who risk being the suffering servant, the one who chooses not to wear the garments of this world, but always seek the love and peace of the kin-dom that draws near. Amen.

Call to Serve.

As we continue to seek to be a place of compassion and support to our community, we ask that you give prayerful consideration as to how you may support our efforts. If you would like to make a donation, gifts can still be mailed to our church office, or online donations can be made through the link in the video description. Thanks again for all your support, and may we continue to work together to keep being a place of ministry that seeks to promote the growth of God's shalom around us. As we listen to this interlude played by Annie, let's reflect on how we can promote the kin-dom of God in our own lives, and how we can be a force in contrast to the violence of the kin-doms of this world.

A Time for Reflection

Reflection on the Word [video] *Be Thou My Vision,*

played by church musician Annie Center

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9pYzq7uXOg&feature=youtu.be>

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Gracious God, receive the gift of our lives and this offering of our service to carry your love from this place to a world in need. This we pray in the name of Christ, whom with you and the Holy Spirit, reign in our hearts and lives, one God now and forever. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

Be glad in the Lord always!

Focus your thoughts on all that is true, all that is holy, all that is just, all that is pure, all that is lovely, and all that is worthy of praise. And the peace of God—peace that goes far beyond anything we can comprehend—that peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. So go from here with confidence and joy, to serve the Lord.

As we extinguish this candle, carry its divine spark into your lives this week, sharing God's love and light with all you.

(for credits only) re worship blog

Postlude

How Clear is Our Vocation, Lord,

performed by church musician Annie Center,

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QTDgIn0q9s&feature=youtu.be>

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