

Morning Prayer 22nd November 2020

The Sunday next before Advent -
Christ the King

Service with Tini Horning



Personal preparation before the service begins.
Please take time to remember where you are,
and why you are here.
Give thanks and become still
in the presence of God

Prelude

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with us.
This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Song

Come, now is the time to worship
<https://youtu.be/-jU1q33K6yQ>

Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are, to worship.
Come, just as you are, before your God. - Come.

One day every tounge will confess you are God.
One day every knee will bow.
Still the greatest treasure remains for those
Who gladly choose you now.

Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.

Oh, come. Just as you are to worship.
Come just as you are before your God. - Come.

One day every tongue will confess you our God.
One day every knee will bow.
Still the greatest treasure remains for those
who gladly choose you now. (repeat)

Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship.
Come, just as you are before your God. - Come.

Come, come, come...

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Let us pray with words from Psalm 29

(A psalm of David.)

Ascribe to the Lord, you powers of heaven, ♦
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
Ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name; ♦
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.
The voice of the Lord is upon the waters;
the God of glory thunders; ♦
the Lord is upon the mighty waters.
The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation; ♦
the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice.
The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; ♦

the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;
He makes Lebanon skip like a calf ♦
and Sirion like a young wild ox.
The voice of the Lord splits the flash of lightning;
the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; ♦
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe
and strips the forests bare; ♦
in his temple all cry, 'Glory!'
The Lord sits enthroned above the water flood; ♦
the Lord sits enthroned as king for evermore.

The Lord shall give strength to his people; ♦
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit,
**As it was in the beginning,
is now and shall be for ever.**

The Collect for today, the Sunday next before Advent -
Christ the King

God the Father,
help us to hear the call of Christ the King
and to follow in his service,
whose kingdom has no end;
for he reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, one glory.
Amen.

The first reading is taken from Psalm 95:1-7

Let us prepare ourselves for the word of God
Our hearts and our minds are open

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.

For the Lord is the great God,
the great King above all gods.
In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.
The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.

Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;
for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.

Today, if only you would hear his voice, ...

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The reading is taken from Matthew 28:16-20

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Homily

I want to focus today on the Gospel text, which might be more or less known to you and one that is near and dear to my heart, one that influenced me to come to Freiburg 16 years ago, calling me to make disciples amongst college students and one that continually both challenges and comforts me.

These are the Jesus' last words to His disciples before He ascended into heaven to be with His and our Father. These are Jesus' famous last words, if you will. Is the German phrase, "Das Beste kommt zum Schluss" (the best comes at the end) also true here? If you are unsure now, you can tell me after the service... and after we have looked at them a bit.

So what do these famous last words say? I can't give you a complete answer, partially because I feel like these few sentences are not enough to go by. Please permit me a slight sidetrack to talk about communication and meaning. Perspective, context and audience play an incredible role here and in all communication. Did you know that research shows that words alone (without body language or tone) carry only 10% of a message's meaning? The majority of what we communicate is "said" through our body language (55%) and our tone (10%). This can be both harmful and helpful. Who besides me has written an email quickly and sent it without rereading it and finds out the mail's recipient ends up totally misinterpreting your message and writes back in unnecessary frustration? Or...I know in my early days of learning German I was super grateful that I could somehow manage to get my point across to the baker or the taxi driver by just pointing a finger and/or acting out what I needed!

Over the years I have actually understood this passage in variety of ways—impacted by upbringing, church background, teaching, etc. Maybe you have too? It is unfortunate that we don't have a video recording of Jesus saying these last words where we could observe His body language and hear the tone and volume of His voice. That would definitely help in understanding the message. (And, although you can watch countless movies about Jesus' life, I am not sure which one would be the most accurate interpretation of this scene.)

Jesus' tone has varied in my mind from time to time, which has strongly influenced how I've interpreted these verses. How do you hear the words, "Go, therefore, and make disciples?" (How was it read just a few minutes ago?) Is it with a strong commanding and controlling voice, like the German title of the verses "der Missionsbefehl" (the command to missions). Is there an accompanying index finger calling the disciples to hurry up and go (or else)? If so, I imagine the disciples reacting more out of fear and trepidation.

Or...could it have been more of a strong but softer voice saying, "Go," with a smile on his face and open arms, as a response to Jesus seeing His disciples bubbling over with so much excitement and energy like kids who struggle to sit still on Christmas morning, eager to hand out the presents they have made for their families or who come home from school with the latest and most exciting news and are dying to share the news with others. Could he have had tears in His eyes, knowing that His time on Earth (for now) was over and that the side-by-side ministry how they had been doing it would end and He'd be ascending to heaven? This version corresponds more with the "Great Commission," an English title given to the passage.

I definitely don't claim to know which of the two scenarios is closer to the truth and, who knows, it could actually be something totally different. Another way to better understand this passage is to look at WHO is saying it—the messenger. Our picture of Jesus (and God) strongly influences how we hear and see this scene and understand the spoken imperative. Close your eyes. What does Jesus look like? (and here I don't necessarily mean, what color of hair, eyes, skin does he have, etc.) Is he wagging his index finger at you and commanding you to do something? Is he coming running towards you like the father in the parable of the prodigal son? Is it something completely different? Or do you see nothing at all?

It is so important to know WHO is speaking to us. Let's look at today's other readings to see what hints they give us. They provide descriptions of God, but because Jesus is also completely God, we can connect these words with Him as well.

Both Psalms—29 and 95 (go back to the slides) describe God's incomparable power, glory, strength, honor, and greatness. This can paint a very intimidating picture...like a super hero or perhaps some could see him as a villain to be scared of IF you didn't see the other aspect mentioned in Psalm 95 "the flock under His care." This aspect is more clearly described in the

words of Psalm 23, “The Lord is our Shepherd.” Additionally, God is described as the “rock of our salvation,” meaning our support, the one who forgives us from all our sins and makes it possible for us to be with Him.

How does this help us interpret Jesus’ famous last words? With the description of God’s voice as one that is like a flash of lightening and the description of his might, I can see how one might picture a somewhat harsh and commanding Jesus proclaiming, “Go...” At the same time, there is also evidence of a gentler and more shepherding Jesus.

I personally grew up imagining God and Jesus more as being far away yet loving and even remember once, as a child, laying on the grass in our front yard, looking up at the sky and imagining seeing Jesus sitting on His heavenly throne. Then, in my teenage years, I had a phase where I thought God was irrelevant, distant, and even questioned if he really cared about what was happening with me and my family.

That view changed after I had a life-threatening accident where I met Jesus in a very personal way. I sensed His deep and unconditional love for me and his desire for me not just to DO things for Him and to be a good person but more than everything else to be in a relationship with me. What an incredible blessing and an amazing gift!

So... back to the Gospel. I can’t paint an exact picture of the scene, but I do know that Jesus calls us to go and make disciples—to tell people the good news of an unconditionally loving and all-powerful God, who longs to have a relationship with His children, who forgives ALL our sins and promises a life abundantly!

These truths are incomparable to the offers this world can give us! They are one-of-a-kind, unsurpassable. It’s mind-boggling that the creator of the Earth, an all-powerful God, the KING (since it’s Christ the King Sunday) wants to have a relationship with me. AND, what’s more, He even promises in the last sentence of the passage, “and surely, I am with you always, to the

end of the age!” He is not only somethings there...a friend or companion when it fits His busy schedule, but HE is always there!!

If this is all true, then shouldn't we be fidgety like the anxious children I mentioned before, dying to share the good news or pass out the special gift? Maybe you are! If so, that's great! GO!! And share the good news!

If you are not, then welcome to the club! I have often lacked the passion or felt distant to the truths that God offers. So, what do we do? There is no fine print in the Bible that says, “Go ...when you feel like it or if you want to or Go if you are a missionary or a pastor. It does say, though, to “make disciples of all nations” and there I would take the literary freedom to say that each one of us is included in the ALL part.

If we are not experiencing or lacking in understanding of the Gospel, if Jesus feels distant and we can't sense that He is with us, then the great commission starts with us in our own hearts. I know most of us haven't been on a plane in some time, but can you dig out the memory of the security announcement pre-takeoff? What should you do first with the oxygen masks if the cabin pressure changes? You should first put the mask on yourself before helping others, right?

It is the same way with our faith. The good news of the Gospel first needs to be understood and experienced by us before we pass it on to others. (It is possible to do so without fully understanding and experiencing it for a short time, but I think you would quickly burn out in doing it that way and, besides that, you would miss out on the whole relational aspect of really experiencing God going with you.

So, what picture do you have of Jesus and the Gospel scene now? Has it changed? Is it more vivid? Can you better imagine Jesus saying His last words to His disciples?

May I suggest the following next steps...

1. For all of us who have a muddled view of God and Jesus....spend time in prayer and ask Him to reveal Himself to you. Wait expectantly for Him. Rev. 3:20 says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me."

2. For those of us who know in our heads the Gospel truths mentioned but have lost the excitement for sharing it, let's pray that the Holy Spirit, God in us, would give light the fire of passion for Him within us, giving us boldness and courage to GO!

And...when we finally do GO, it doesn't have to be across the world or even across town. It can be going to our family or our friends, to whomever God puts on our heart. And...we don't need to worry about WHAT to say or how to say it because God promises to give us the words we need. Just share what you have experienced with Jesus. Tell them that they have a GOD that LOVES them so much and wants to have a relationship with them.

And...know in and through it all HE is with us...even to the end of the age.

Amen!

Intercessions (by Klaus)

Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;
for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.

Lord we come before you this morning to confess, worship you and pray for your intercession in our lives. Lord help us to learn to trust you and lean on you in good as in bad time. Let us truly shout aloud that you are the Rock of our salvation. Let this cry whenever it is a shout of joy and praise or a cry of despair be heard by you and give us the confidence that you will answer in time in your good, mighty and loving way. Lord let us

hear your voice among all the many voices of the day.
Let your voice drive away the voice of failure, the voice of false guilt, the voice of pride, the lack of voices when we feel isolated and lonely.

Come, let us bow down in worship,
Reply: **for he is our God**

Lord we come before you in times of raging COVID19. It has been a long time since we were free to meet, free to do what we wanted, free to have visitors and parties. Lord, between the fear of COVID19 and the anger or depression about restrictions let us find hope and trust in your promise that we are the people of your pasture and the flock under your care. In all times let us see, hear, feel your presence promised to us in your great commission: "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Lord , let us find strength in you let us be filled by your spirit, let your spirit fill us to the brim and bubble over, so that we can go out and share your good news, bring hope to the desperate, wipe away tears of the mourning, be available and present to all despite the social distancing required in this time. Let 1,5m never be too far to reach the other person's heart and soul and mind.

Come, let us bow down in worship,
Reply: **for he is our God**

Lord we come before you on behalf of all the people who are close to our hearts and currently struggling with acute or chronic illness. Let them experience you as the Raphael the God who heals. Healing may come in many different ways, Lord show us your way. Lord let us as a community be your nurse to help where needed. We pray during this time especially for Brian, Margaret, Bev, and all we know suffering from illness at this time...

Come, let us bow down in worship,
Reply: **for he is our God**

Will you come and follow me
<https://youtu.be/zk6IUalJ3sk>

Will You Come And Follow Me
If I But Call Your Name?
Will You Go Where You Don't Know
And Never Be The Same?
Will You Let My Love Be Shown,
Will You Let My Name Be Known,
Will You Let My Life Be Grown
In You And You In Me?

Will You Leave Yourself Behind
If I But Call Your Name?
Will You Care For Cruel And Kind
And Never Be The Same?
Will You Risk The Hostile Stare
Should Your Life Attract Or Scare?
Will You Let Me Answer Prayer
In You And You In Me?

Will You Let The Blinded See
If I But Call Your Name?
Will You Set The Prisoners Free
And Never Be The Same?
Will You Kiss The Leper Clean,
And Do Such As This Unseen,
And Admit To What I Mean
In You And You In Me?

Will You Love The 'You' You Hide
If I But Call Your Name?
Will You Quell The Fear Inside
And Never Be The Same?
Will You Use The Faith You've Found
To Reshape The World Around,
Through My Sight And Touch And Sound
In You And You In Me?

Lord, Your Summons Echoes True
When You But Call My Name.
Let Me Turn And Follow You
And Never Be The Same.
In Your Company I'll Go

Where Your Love And Footsteps Show.
Thus I'll Move And Live And Grow
In You And You In Me.

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The Blessing

The Lord bless us and watch over us,
the Lord make his face shine upon us
and be gracious to us,
the Lord look kindly on us and give us peace;
and the blessing
of God Almighty, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us now and always.

Amen.

The Conclusion

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.

Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Christ is enough for me

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teUxQpnhezY>

Christ is my reward
And all of my devotion
Now there's nothing in this world
That could ever satisfy
Through every trial
My soul will sing
No turning back
I've been set free

Christ is enough for me

Christ is enough for me
Everything I need is in You
Everything I need

Christ my all in all
The joy of my salvation
And this hope will never fail
Heaven is our home
Through every storm
My soul will sing
Jesus is here
To God be the glory

Christ is enough for me
Christ is enough for me
Everything I need is in You
Everything I need

I have decided to follow Jesus
No turning back
No turning back (repeat)

The cross before me
The world behind me
No turning back
No turning back (repeat)

Christ is enough for me
Christ is enough for me
Everything I need is in You
Everything I need (repeat)

I have decided to follow Jesus
No turning back
No turning back (repeat)

I have decided to follow Jesus
No turning back
No turning back (repeat)