

Worship at Home for November 22 2020

You may choose to read right through this document, stopping for your own reflection at any time, or only read the prayers or the scripture or reflection. You might read with family or friends, or alone. Links will take you to music that may enhance your experience as you move through the worship, but you might choose to visit them later, or not at all. Feel free to share this with anyone who might be interested.

If you'd like to comment or have a question, please call or email me directly:
416-951-7911 minister@applewoodunited.ca

In the Spirit

Rev. Joanne

Centering Prayer

Source of Compassion and Love,
Divine Love and hope for the world -
surround us with your presence,
infuse us with your peace
as we enter our personal time of worship this day.
Amen

Opening Music: "Make A Joyful Noise All the Earth"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5hoeObqNGc>

Opening Prayer

All-seeing, all-knowing God,
you tend to our needs even when we cannot see you,
you know our hearts even when we barely know them ourselves.
Keep our eyes open to the needs of those around us,
keep our hearts open to the possibilities to share your love and compassion.
We seek to follow Jesus' way of caring for
and of seeing those who are often hidden in our society.
So give us the tools we need to build a world where none are hungry,
none feel isolated, none live without shelter or comfort.
In Jesus' name and hope we pray.
Amen

Scripture Matthew 25:31-45

'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me."

Reflection

This Sunday is the last in our church or liturgical year, and the New Year actually begins with Advent next Sunday. This is known as "Reign of Christ" Sunday, so the images of angels and thrones fit well into this theme. Yet the enduring aspect of this scripture is that one line - "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." It seems to sum up Jesus' entire social ministry, and all we are called to do as followers of his way.

Yet I can't help thinking about sheep and goats. How many times have I been on the left side – ignoring the needs of others because it was inconvenient, or seemed risky, or just did not seem like it was my problem? How often have I shaken my head at a news story about Indigenous communities living for decades without safe water, and not called my Member of Parliament to demand change? How frequently have I hurried past a homeless person on a city street? How habitually have I ignored the imprisoned – whether that is a prison of racism or prejudice or violence or drug addiction or one of bars and steel? How many times can I really say I was on the 'right' side?

Have there been times when you have regretted an action – or not taking action? What might you have done differently? How did that make you feel?

The good news for us is that this is not a description of what must be, but a caution. I believe that God wants us all to be on the right – God loves us all, even when we are imperfect, even

when we must try again and again to love freely and generously, to show kindness and concern, to work for justice for all those who are members of God's family.

Seeing the face of Jesus in those we encounter is our pathway to move from being goats to sheep, from self-centered living to self-awareness, from armchair justice speakers to active justice seekers. For some, no such vision is needed to act inclusively, compassionately and lovingly. For others, it takes work to recognize people clearly as God's beloved, to see their worth and their beauty as our siblings in the world that God has created.

For all of us, belonging to a community of faith that actively affirms worth and recognizes belovedness, that seeks to reach out to clothe, to feed, to support and welcome can help us in our task of being Jesus followers. As the seasons of Advent and Christmas approach, let's work together to be on the 'right' side, where God's love is experienced in abundance.

Music: "When I Needed a Neighbour Were You There?"

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

Prayers of the People

Loving God, in this time and in our various places,
we remember that you have called us to lives that seek justice,
love kindness, and to walk humbly with you.

We thank you for the people who show kindness to us:
teachers and others who work in our schools, colleges and universities,
health care professionals including dentists and physical therapists, doctors
nurses and personal support workers.

We thank you for the kindness shared with us in our families,
and between friends. We thank you for all the opportunities we
have to share kindness with others.

Remind us, Holy One, to show kindness to you by caring for others.
Remind us to share not only from our abundance,
but also when we may feel we have less – less patience, fewer connections with others,
scarcer resources, or not as much hope as we used to have.

Help us to recognize the needs of those in our neighbourhoods,
in our city and our region, so that we can feed those who are hungry,
care for those who are sick, and welcome those who feel they are outsiders.
Today, God, we pray for people who are sick and in hospital, or sick and staying in their homes.
We pray for anyone who is suffering with mental illness, or people who are waiting for tests
and treatments. We pray for everyone who is infected and fighting COVID-19 today,
and for the families that love them.

We pray for families and individuals who are worried about warm clothing for winter, or how they will pay for their groceries or their rent.

We pray for small business owners who cannot afford to keep their employees, and we pray for those who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic.

We pray for all people who feel like they are not heard or not seen: homeless folk, black, indigenous and people of colour, all our siblings in the LGBTQ + community, people facing mental health challenges, or monetary challenges – knowing that they are often the same.

Keep us praying, God, and keep us working for justice and showing kindness through our actions and our choices.

Hear our prayers, God –and through Jesus our Light, the Spirit our guide, and in your love, answer them. Amen

Closing music: “Go Make a Diff’rence”

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

Blessing

Go from this space and time and be the hands that heal
and the ears that listen with patience.

be the feet that stand with the oppressed
and the mouth that speaks truth.

Be the eyes that see the holy in all people
and the heart that is full of life.

Go now in peace, and may the Spirit of Christ
reign in your hearts. Amen

From “Prayers for All Seasons” Year A. Adapted.