

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Reverend Anne H.K. Apple
Sunday, November 22, 2020

Matthew 25: 31-46

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.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

In the musical *Rent*, on a dark stage, under the wash of a single spotlight, Roger, sings, “Glory. Find one song to redeem this empty life. A song about love.” *Glory*.

This morning our liturgy highlights the language, “Christ as King.” Today’s text helps us to see this imagery. The Son of Man, now King, will sit on a throne,

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Reverend Anne H.K. Apple
Sunday, November 22, 2020

actually - the throne of glory. Imagine God's brilliance, beaming light; a light shining in the darkness, on a savior who commands respect. But also imagine, radiance that illumines *all* that needs to be revealed, shining a light into the darkest corners where love is needed.

Christ the King Sunday is the day the church acknowledges and affirms the universal and eternal rule and reign of Christ as Lord, Jesus who is the King and Ruler of All Creation.

It is a Sunday when we hold the tension between anticipating this seemingly far off time of Christ's eventual return and acknowledging the truth that Christ rules our lives everyday. God's kingdom - the already and the not yet. Christ calls to us to serve him today, to see where we are called to serve in Christ's light.

Just this morning at Wade into Worship, Ms. Marjorie modeled this light as she lit individual candles from one Christ candle. Marjorie named each participant in worship, lit a candle and revealed how Christ's light and radiance grows.

Everyday gives each of us an opportunity to take on the humanity of another in Christ's radiance.

To say Jesus is 'Lord of All' means we don't want to be known as perpetrators and spectators of suffering and pain; we want to be partners with Christ's mercy, love and justice.

Or, I'd say, using today's scripture imagery, ...

We want to be the sheep - seeing things that need to be seen, especially the least of these, and serving to relieve suffering with Christ's love. We long to represent Christ's glory with a song of redemption, a song of love - that our very lives might reveal the light of Christ's love.

Who wants to be a goat? A goat? Not seeing things, like the least of these, and the reality of suffering and pain. Who wants to miss the mark of where Christ is calling us to serve? Who wants to be judged with the devil and his angels, and doomed to eternal punishment? *I'm really not wanting to be a goat ... and I know that the truth is I'm more of a goat than a sheep.*

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Reverend Anne H.K. Apple
Sunday, November 22, 2020

In the novel, *Cutting for Stone*, one of the characters, a teaching surgeon places his hand on a frightened and fighting patient's shoulder and says, "Don't worry, it's going to be alright." Having just dealt with a combative patient, the teacher turns and asks his students, "What treatment is offered, by ear, in an emergency?" The answer to the teacher's question is "Words of comfort."

When we are like the sheep, and find ourselves in the presence of pain and suffering, we say, "***I see you. We see you. The light sees you.***" We offer the brilliance, the glory of the Lord. Christ's light finds a way through us.

At one of the first Pride parades in which Idlewild marched, it poured. Our group waited under Idlewild umbrellas. A young woman standing nearby looked at me, and obviously noticed the church logo on the umbrella. She shook her head, "I don't do church anymore." "Tell me more," I said.

"It's simple – I got tired of the preacher telling me I was worthless. I had a choice – I could choose life and leave church – or keep coming back and hear how worthless I was. It was killing me. I decided to leave instead of die."

Her experience of Christ, through the witness of the church and her people had not revealed a brilliance but instead cast an even harsher shadow.

Our judgment is oft misplaced and separates one from another. Judgment belongs to God. Our task is not to separate one from another, but to see and to shine Christ's light. Glory.

The young woman's painful story about church hurt asks us to examine and to claim our identity as Christians - to know who we are because we profess faith in a Risen Christ who is Lord and Ruler of All. I see you. We see you. The Light sees you.

A year ago, a group of people gathered in Montgomery Hall to watch a documentary film, "Locked in a Box." The evening was the launch of a year-long discernment period - for Idlewild to study the topic of immigration and to discern a faithful response for the church.

The film traced the lives of several who fled from their homelands in search of safety and freedom. These refugees ended up in for profit prisons in a system run by Immigration, Customs and Enforcement.

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Reverend Anne H.K. Apple
Sunday, November 22, 2020

The story told was not a new one. Christ speaks for the marginalized throughout the gospel, maybe no more so than in today's text. The gospel of Jesus Christ, who is Lord and Ruler of All Creation shines a light into these places and asks of us, "whose will you be?"

Conversations about immigration continued through the church year. A small group traveled to the border to gather stories and experience life at the border. It was not a trip for the faint of heart. It was an encounter with those who had been entangled in the pain and suffering of being a refugee or immigrant seeking asylum.

The film, the study, the travel, the conversations and prayers - led to the Idlewild Session endorsing a new outreach ministry. "No Longer Strangers." has 5 specific actions for discipleship. Today at 5:00 the group will present the ministry to the congregation. This new ministry will help us as the church say in specific ways - "I see you. We see you. The light sees you."

Christ the King desires that we live in unity. When we take on the suffering of another, their hunger - their thirst, their loneliness, their fear ... we take on their humanity. I see you. We see you. The light sees you.

Years ago, gathered in the Narthex, before the 11:00 o'clock service, a young boy stood at the back doors of the sanctuary. It was the first Sunday in Advent. He waited to bring the Christ candle down the center aisle.

We put a tea light in a small glass container to best fit the shape of his hands - a practical, technical detail. I bent down and asked him if he was ready to bring Christ's light into the sanctuary and if he had any questions. He looked up at me and asked, "Why is this light so small?"

It was as if he'd been intensely listening on Christ the King Sunday the week before. This young boy knew about Christ's love, and the Lordship of Christ. He knew that Christ's love should burn large and bright. This young boy knew an intimate truth - that Christ's love has the power to put light into the most broken and vulnerable places of our lives - and sometimes that is right in the middle of a church aisle and a congregation gathered full of people.

A young woman hurt by the church says, "I decided to leave instead of die." A young boy's question, "Why is this light so small?" point us to the already, but the

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Reverend Anne H.K. Apple
Sunday, November 22, 2020

not yet. They reveal an awareness of Christ's calling upon our lives, especially our life in the world today.

Glory.

I see you.

We see you.

The light sees you.

Thanks be to God.