

# IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

---

The Reverend Courtnay Veazey  
Sunday, November 24, 2024

---

## Prayer for Illumination

Sovereign God,  
let your Word rule in our hearts  
and your Spirit govern our lives  
until at last we see the fulfillment  
of your realm of justice and peace;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

A reading from the Gospel according to John.

‘Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?” Pilate replied, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom belonged to this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”’

Holy wisdom, holy word.

**Thanks be to God.**

Today is Reign of Christ Sunday – a feast day that marks the end of our liturgical year – a festival that concludes our church calendar – but I need to confess that I enter this space carrying the dark quiet of Holy Saturday.

The dark quiet that comes when grief and mourning rupture our sense of truth.

The dark quiet that comes when death silences Jesus’ voice.

Reign of Christ and Holy Saturday swirl together in my soul, and I wonder who else this morning feels that tension – who else this morning is struggling to glorify the Ancient One when grief’s rawness grasps us and stills our breath?

If you arrived here carrying sacred memories of Margaret Burnett or Vanessa Joy (Caitlin Bomar) or anyone whose absence makes your heart ache, you are not alone.

If you arrived here feeling disoriented and disjointed, you are not alone.

And if you arrived here uncertain of how the Holy Spirit will hold you, you are not alone.

## IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

---

The Reverend Courtnay Veazey  
Sunday, November 24, 2024

---

While reflecting on the history of Reign of Christ Sunday, I realized that this feast day arose because a pope desired to comfort and re-orient the Church as the Church was discerning how to be in a crumbling world.

This feast day that centers on the everlasting kingdom of our crucified and risen Christ was established by Pope Pius XI in 1925 – a time of revolutionary upheaval following World War I.

As roaring floods lifted their voices, the Church needed reminding that the Lord is “more majestic than the thunders of mighty waters...”.

We need this reminding, too, for our healing depends on our ability to listen for Jesus’ voice amidst our lives’ roaring waters.

Our individual and collective healing depends on listening to Jesus’ voice. And perhaps our listening begins with questioning.

Our Gospel reading this morning places us in the thunderous waters of Jesus’ trial – an interesting setting to help us remember the Reign of Christ.

The Roman governor Pilate meets Jesus for the first time in the occupying government’s headquarters and asks, “Are you the King?”

I don’t know if Pilate asked this question from a place of cynicism or mocking or fear or pity or genuine curiosity, but I find Pilate’s question deeply poignant.

Are you the King?

When Jesus meets us in the roaring floods of our lives’ trials, how do we ask this question to our Lord – our Alpha and Omega – the One who loves us and frees us?

In the roaring floods of our lives’ trials, how do we find ourselves embodying this question?

Lately, this question emerges from my body with rage in my voice and tears in my eyes.

Jesus, are you the King?

My rage and tears come from lament that is born of hope – lament that is born of hope.

While walking through the woods last week, I watched an acorn fall to the ground, and I cried.

I cried because this falling acorn helped me hear Jesus’ voice talking about how a grain of wheat falls into the earth, dies, and bears much fruit. It helped me remember that death and resurrection is the hardest and the most beautiful and the truest story I can ever tell.

This acorn pulled me above the roaring floods just enough to catch a healing glimpse of God’s kingdom – the truth of death and resurrection – the truth for which Jesus was born and to which Jesus testified – the truth to which we all belong when we listen to Jesus’ voice.

Jesus, are you the king?

Pilate’s question – our question – opens us to a conversation with our God.

And perhaps, when we feel the dark quiet of Holy Saturday closing in on us, that is exactly what we need – an opening.

# IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

---

The Reverend Courtney Veazey  
Sunday, November 24, 2024

---

My theology professor in seminary often talked about the need to stomp our feet in protest when we pray the Lord's Prayer – particularly when we pray, "May your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

We often say this portion of the prayer so meekly and mildly, she would say.

But what if we stomp our feet in protest because we know how beautifully different Jesus' kingdom is, and we yearn for that kingdom to be here on earth.

We yearn for a kingdom in which "mourning and crying and pain will be no more."

We yearn for a kingdom that does not belong to this world.

We yearn for a king who comes into the cosmos to bear witness to the truth – especially during trials.

The Jesus that Pilate's question opens us up to this morning uses a time of trial to define the Ancient of Days' everlasting dominion and indestructible kingship.

The worlds' trials cannot destroy Jesus' rule.

If anything, the worlds' trials and crises cause Jesus' rule to become clearer as Jesus points us toward something drastically different than the kings and kingdoms we encounter in this world.

Rabbi Delphine Horvilleur, one of only five female rabbis in France, shared in a 2022 *New York Times* profile that, "A wonderful word in modern Hebrew is mashber, or crisis. Originally, [this word – mashber – crisis] meant birthing stool."

Crisis and birthing stool become one and the same.

This Reign of Christ Sunday contains the dark quiet of Holy Saturday.

It contains our trials and crises, our mourning and lament.

It also contains our birthing.

There's a painting in my study at home that came from the house of one of Idlewild's former pastors – Steve Montgomery.

In this painting, Steve reads a book beneath a bare, autumnal tree whose golden leaves blanket the ground. Beside him are two women – one painting and one resting in a hammock.

A picture of comfort in a fresh season of loss.

In addition to this imagery of community being present with one another, the following words hover over the twilight sky –

"Some people go to priests;

others to poetry;

I to my friends."

To whom or what do we turn in seasons of loss?

Some people go to priests;

others to poetry;

we to a question that opens us to hope –

Jesus, are you the king?

# IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

---

The Reverend Courtnay Veazey  
Sunday, November 24, 2024

---

Listen to Jesus' voice, and we will hear the truth.

I am the bread of life.

I am the light of the world.

I am the gate for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd.

I am the vine.

In our Holy Saturdays, Christ will reign forever and ever.

In our heartbreak, Christ will reign forever and ever.

In our tears, Christ will reign forever and ever.

In the fullness of our lives, the one who is and who was and is to come will reign forever and ever.

So it is to be.