

November 22, 2020  
Thanksgiving Sunday & Christ the King Sunday  
Gather Us In

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**PRELUDE**

***We Gather Together***

*While this hymn appears in our American hymnals as a Thanksgiving hymn, it comes to us from the late sixteenth century as a Dutch song celebrating Netherland's freedom from Spanish rule and oppression. Today, it continues to serve as a powerful reminder of God's promise of total liberation that comes through the Son, Jesus the Christ.*

**GREETING & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**      ***My God is so Big, So Strong, and So Mighty***      **LOGOS Choir**

Choir Members: Collin & Connor Erikson, Olivia & Gabriela Lizano, Isaiah Maldonado, and Rebekah Wertz  
Ms. Sara Stoll, LOGOS Worship Arts Leader

My God is so big, so strong, and so mighty -  
There's nothing my God cannot do!  
My God is so big, so strong and so mighty -  
There's nothing my God cannot do!

The mountains are His; the rivers are His!  
The stars are His handiwork too!  
My God is so big, so strong and so mighty -  
There's nothing my God cannot do!!

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION<sup>1</sup>** (Based on Psalm 103:11-12 and Psalm 51:10)

Pastor: Our children sang the words, "Our God is so big, so strong, and so mighty, there's nothing our God cannot do" and that means forgiving our sins, easing our worries and lessening our fears - no matter how small or big.

***All people: The Psalmist said the same thing, but with these words, "God's love for us is greater than the distance between heaven and earth – and - farther than the east is from the west, is how far, God removes our sin from us."***

Pastor: Knowing that this promise of God's is true, let us confess and find peace, strength, and rest for our souls. We will use the words printed in our bulletin and pausing when indicated in order to offer our personal confessions to God.

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<sup>1</sup> Bair, Rev. Laura. All liturgy today was written by Pastor Bair of Starview United Church of Christ (except the Offertory Prayer and Benediction). All was written in light of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and the fatigue that threatens to overtake so many, especially those working in public service and caregiving professions. The liturgy was written recognizing that fear is so prevalent with the future seeming so uncertain – economically, socially, politically, and so forth. It was written with the understanding that fear can paralyze, even God's people, and blind them to their state of blessedness and the reality of God's steadfast faithfulness. It was written to inspire a sense of hope and gratitude as we stand as a nation, on the threshold of the upcoming secular holiday known as Thanksgiving. It was written to encourage an awareness of God's Generous Presence in the midst of these trying days, and to stir within God's people, a spirit of gratitude and a reciprocal outpouring of generosity to meet the needs of the church and community in 2021 and well beyond.

*All people: Good Shepherd, we confess to you our fears, our worries, our anxieties, and our fatigue. (Pause for silent confession)*

*All people: You have given us your perfect love which casts out all fear, and your peace that transcends all understanding. Even so, we confess to feeling dislodged, displaced, untethered, disconnected, and uncertain during these times. (Pause for silent confession)*

*All people: We are so tired, Lord, and in our fatigue, when we see the outstretched hand, hear the cries for help, witness the lonely looks of desperation – even when noticed here in this faithful family of church members and staff - we are tempted to turn aside and look the other way. (Pause for silent confession)*

*All people: You, O Lord, are our Savior, and your teaching reveals that when we minister to the needs of those around us, we are in truth ministering to you. Sharpen our keenness of vision and hearing; soften our hardened hearts, so when the weary, hurting and fearful cross our path, we might respond appropriately to their needs - knowing that in doing so, we have ministered to you in our midst. Have mercy on us, Lord. Give us a clean and right spirit. Come and save us, again. Amen.*

**ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS** (Based on Matthew 11:28-30 and Deuteronomy 30:19)

Pastor: Hear the Good News from the words of Jesus himself, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

*All people: Thanks be to God in Christ who shares our burdens, restores our hope, and gives us a peace that passes all understanding. Thanks be to God in Christ, who sets before us the ways of life and death and invites us to choose life! Alleluia! Amen!*

**HEBREW READING – Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24** (New Revised Standard Version)

<sup>11</sup>For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. <sup>12</sup>As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. <sup>13</sup>I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. <sup>14</sup>I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. <sup>15</sup>I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. <sup>16</sup>I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

<sup>17</sup>As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord GOD: I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats: <sup>18</sup>Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, but you must tread down

with your feet the rest of your pasture? When you drink of clear water, must you foul the rest with your feet? <sup>19</sup>And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have fouled with your feet? <sup>20</sup>Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. <sup>21</sup>Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, <sup>22</sup>I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. <sup>23</sup>I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. <sup>24</sup>And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

### **GOSPEL READING – Matthew 25:31-46 (New Revised Standard Version)**

<sup>31</sup>“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. <sup>32</sup>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, <sup>33</sup>and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. <sup>34</sup>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; <sup>35</sup>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, <sup>36</sup>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.’ <sup>37</sup>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? <sup>38</sup>And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? <sup>39</sup>And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ <sup>40</sup>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.’ <sup>41</sup>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; <sup>42</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup>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.’ <sup>44</sup>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?’ <sup>45</sup>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.’ <sup>46</sup>And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

### **SERMON & PASTORAL PRAYER THE LORD’S PRAYER**

**Rev. Laura C. Bair**

*All people: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom comes. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*

**OFFERING INVITATION**

Liturgist: Blessed and thankful! Even in the midst of crisis, we have cause to give God thanks! For example, your faithful giving throughout this tumultuous year – 2020 – has empowered the ongoing ministry within our congregation and responded to the needs of our community. On this, our Thanksgiving Sunday, we rejoice in God’s faithfulness! Let us take a full minute, to humbly and honestly, reflect on our personal faithfulness, when it comes to the giving of our time, talent, and money – all gifts given to us by God and entrusted to us for the work of God’s kingdom. (Full minute of silence to reflect on one’s stewardship...)

**OFFERTORY PRAYER<sup>2</sup>** (Based on Matthew 25:31-46)

Liturgist: Let us now dedicate ourselves and our gifts to the Lord’s service using the printed prayer...

*All people: God of mercy and compassion, what is the offering that pleases you most? Certainly, not the token gift that makes us feel we have done all that is required, but rather a gift that reminds us that need is all around us, and compassion and love are needed desperately - a gift that acknowledges how blessed we are and is therefore given with a generous and joyful spirit. May the gifts we give through your church help the hungry, thirsty, the imprisoned. May our whole being, time and talent too, be shared, so your love is made real to a world, which is hurting so deeply. We follow in Christ’s holy, loving way. Amen.*

**BENEDICTION<sup>3</sup>**

Pastor: As our time of worship concludes, our time of service begins.

*All people: We return to our living and working amidst a world of need.*

Pastor: As you go from this place,  
carry with you the knowledge that you are recipients of God’s gifts.

*All people: As we go, we vow to share those gifts with the world around us.*

Pastor: And may God walk with you as you travel life’s road.

*All people: Amen.*

**POSTLUDE***Now Thank We All Our God*

*For much of his life, German Lutheran pastor and musician, Martin Rinkart, ministered to the walled city of Eisleben amidst the horrors of the Thirty Years’ War. A hymn history tells how the minister and his family sang this hymn before dinner to thank God for the scraps of food they had on the table, in their meager home, in a desolate refugee city that was afflicted with famine and disease and war.*

<sup>2</sup> Discipleship Ministries. (Adapted) “Offertory Prayer: Reign of Christ/Thanksgiving Sunday, Year A” <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/there-is-now/reign-of-christ-thanksgiving-sunday-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/reign-of-christ-thanksgiving-sunday-offertory-prayers>. 12 November 2020

<sup>3</sup> Gord. Rev. “Thanksgiving Benediction: Commissioning and Benediction.” Posted on Worship Offerings. <http://worshipofferings.blogspot.ca/> 17 November 2020.