

JESUS OF NAZARETH
LIVING INSIDE OUT
MATTHEW 23:1-39
10-11-20

All = bold sections – read together

Leader = regular font – leader reads (choose or rotate leaders)

Sung together = italics

NOTE: Please have a white candle ready to light.

Reflect

1 John 3:18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

Welcome

Good Morning! Welcome to Community Christian Reformed Church's time of worship together. Our God is the God of every good gift (James 1:17). As we prepare to worship this morning, take a moment to reflect on the past 6 + months. What *good things* have you experienced during this time? What *good things* has happened that might become more normative in daily life? What *good things* are you most thankful for?

May the love and joy of the Father, the grace and peace of the Son and the courage and comfort of the Holy Spirit be ours in abundance!

Call to Worship Psalm 23 -- A PSALM OF DAVID.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Take a moment to reflect on all that God does for us. Think of this Psalm thru the lens of the gospel of Jesus Christ. What stands out for you? What might God do for you today, not as a slave or as if it is owed, but as a Shepherd, as a Father and out of love.

Christ Candle – Syria

Suffering is a part of life. However, some suffer far more than others. There are places in this world that are darker and harbor and facilitate evil more than others; where waking up is a dangerous thing. While life is more challenging in America these days, it is nothing compared to other places. While there is more unrest, polarization and hostility, we still have freedom and our persecution in minimal.

Syria is a country of about 18.5 million people and 744,00 Christians. The country's years-long civil war has left it in turmoil, and Christians have not been spared from that suffering. Christians are caught in



the crossfire between government troops and rebel forces, especially at the frontlines. Additionally, Christians are at risk if forces antagonistic to Christianity rule their home regions. Even in more secure parts of Syria, Christians who have converted from Islam face pressure and discrimination from the communities.

Prayer Points: Pray for peace for Syria and ask God to relieve the suffering of Christians in hostile regions held by rebel groups who oppose Christianity. Pray for critical relief and aid to reach Christians who have fled their homes or lack basic resources in their cities. Pray for Syrian church leaders to have wisdom, perseverance and discernment as they lead their people and provide hope.

Jesus is the Light. We are a light. Shine His light!

May we magnify the glory and worth of our great God. May we adore him for who he is. May we sing this song as a testimony to his majesty and splendor!

Song Behold Our God -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gqrli3Lkf58>

*Who has held the oceans in his hands?
Who has numbered every grain of sand?
Kings and nations tremble at his voice
All creation rises to rejoice
Behold our God, seated on his throne
Come, let us adore him
Behold our king, nothing can compare
Come, let us adore him
Who has given counsel to the Lord?
Who can question any of his words?
Who can teach, the one who knows all things?
Who can fathom all his wondrous deeds?
Behold our God, seated on his throne
Come, let us adore him
Behold our king, nothing can compare
Come, let us adore him
Who has felt the nails upon his hands?
Bearing all the guilt of sinful man
God eternal, humbled to the grave
Jesus, Savior, risen now to reign
Behold our God, seated on his throne
Come, let us adore him
Behold our king, nothing can compare
Come, let us adore
Behold our God, seated on his throne
Come, let us adore him
Behold our king, nothing can compare
Come, let us adore Him*

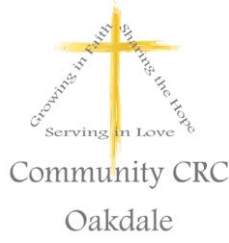


Prayer

Pray in gratitude and delight. Praise God for who he is and what he has done. Confess your sins. Ask for you to be more aware and appreciative of his presence in your life. Pray to be conformed more into the image and likeness of Jesus of Nazareth, who removed our chains of sin in an act of amazing grace. Pray that we might understand freedom primarily from a gospel perspective and not a nationalistic perspective.

Song Amazing Grace/May Chains Are Gone -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrwkCOUOlil>

*Amazing grace
How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see
'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed
My chains are gone
I've been set free
My God, my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy rains
Unending love, Amazing grace
The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures
My chains are gone
I've been set free
My God, my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy rains
Unending love, Amazing grace
My chains are gone
I've been set free
My God, my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy rains
Unending love, Amazing grace
The Earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God, Who called me here below
Will be forever mine
Will be forever mine
You are forever mine*



Song Jesus Paid It All -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaZbqDd33Yw>

*I hear the Savior say
Thy strength indeed is small
Child of weakness, watch and pray
Find in me thine all in all*

*Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe
Sin had left a crimson stain
He washed it white as snow*

*Lord, now indeed I find
Thy power and thine alone
Can change the leper's spots
And melt the heart of stone*

*Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe
Sin had left a crimson stain
He washed it white as snow*

*And when before the throne
I stand in him complete
Jesus died my soul to save
My lips shall still repeat*

*Jesus paid it all
All to him I owe
Sin had left a crimson stain
He washed it white as snow*

Offering

We call giving an act of stewardship. Stewardship means “the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care.” How does this help shape our motive *for* and delight *in* giving?

We remember that giving is an act of faith, a practice of hope and an expression of love.

(You can give by sending your offering to the church, P.O. Box 217, Oakdale Ca 95361 or consider giving online through your bank. Our deacons can help you with this if necessary.)

Youth Celebration

Our youth are not just the next generation, their presence and participation are vital for the health of our church community today. We have been looking at core reasons why this is true; they are image bearers of God; they are passionate and energetic, they are agents of ministry now and they remind the broader church that relationships, rather than structures, are the conduit for gospel movement (this was adapted from Shane Stacey). Take a moment to remind yourself of their value and contributions to the church of who they are and what they provide respectively. Then pray for our church to continue to be an intergenerational church that values every generation and that seeks to build relationships between every generation.

Baptism Betsy Norwood, daughter of Justin and Arijaan Norwood

Baptismal Grace:



1. Forgiveness (washing away of our sins by the blood of Jesus)
2. United with Christ (dying and rising with him)
3. United with each other (together we are the body of Christ on earth)
4. Identity (we are God's beloved children)

Song All Glory Be To Christ -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6P2R9aTAP>

*Should nothing of our efforts stand
No legacy survive
Unless the Lord does raise the house
In vain its builders strive
To you who boast tomorrow's gain
Tell me what is your life
A mist that vanishes at dawn
All glory be to Christ

All glory be to Christ our King
All glory be to Christ
His rule and reign will ever sing
All glory be to Christ

His will be done
His kingdom come
On earth as is above
Who is Himself our daily bread
Praise Him the Lord of love
Let living water satisfy
The thirsty without price
We'll take a cup of kindness yet
All glory be to Christ

All glory be to Christ our King
All glory be to Christ
His rule and reign will ever sing
All glory be to Christ

When on the day the great I Am
The faithful and the true
The Lamb who was for sinners slain
Is making all things new
Behold our God shall live with us
And be our steadfast light
And we shall ere his people be
All glory be to Christ

All glory be to Christ our King
All glory be to Christ
His rule and reign will ever sing*



All glory be to Christ

Scripture Reading Matthew 23:1-39

Gospel Message: Living Inside Out

Have you ever done something that wasn't quite authentic simply to impress other people? Have you ever gone along with something that didn't feel right out of fear of what others might think of you or say about you if you spoke up? We all have! It isn't easy to maintain a consistent, credible and coherent witness to Jesus of Nazareth. We fight the cultural forces that would have us be shaped into its image and not Jesus'; to conform to the ways of the world that embrace ideas and actions that are against Jesus and his kingdom. This passage is about the practice of "being obvious" that we talked about last week. It is about matching our outside with our inside. Its about being intentional with what we "put on" so that as disciples of Jesus, we image him and not the world; to put on his robe of righteousness (from two weeks ago) and not the imaginary clothes of the world.

There's a story about this you might remember from your childhood. Hans Christian Anderson's "The Emperor's New Clothes" is a fairy tale about two con men who pretended to be weavers and convinced the Emperor they had a magical fabric with which they could make him the finest suit in all the land. The magic of the fabric, said the con men, is that it can only be seen by those who are intelligent and brave. It appears invisible to those who are stupid and incompetent.

The Emperor, who loves fine clothing is excited about this magical suit, and he pays the men a handsome sum to get a suit ready for an upcoming parade. After a week the Emperor sends men to check on the weavers work. When each man realizes he sees nothing, they do not want to admit this as they don't want to appear stupid and incompetent. So, each man lies to the Emperor, saying how wonderful the suit is looking. The suit is brought to the Emperor on the day of the parade. The Emperor sees nothing, but he too, did not want to be seen to be stupid or incompetent, so he agrees that the suit is wonderful and goes to put it on. The Emperor then goes on his royal parade through town in front of his entire kingdom with no clothes on. Everyone in the kingdom sees the emperor without clothes, but for fear of being accused of being stupid or incompetent, they all speak to each other about how magnificent he looks. Finally, a child yells out, "The Emperor isn't wearing any clothes!" Then everyone realizes what is actually true and starts giggling. Then everyone starts exclaiming together, "The Emperor has no clothes on!" The Emperor then found himself standing in the middle of the parade wearing nothing but his pride.

We can all probably relate to this story because we all share a common challenge. We humans tend to be tribal creatures. That is, we often feel a strong pull to fit in and be part of the pack. We feel drawn to conform rather than risk rejection. But this internal pressure to conform means we can sometimes deny our own feelings instead of listening to them. It means we might hold off on challenging the status quo even if something really doesn't feel right to us. Sometimes we might make decisions and take actions with little reason than the fact that everyone else is doing it. The apostle Paul says in Romans 12 to not conform to the world but to be transformed by the renewal of your minds. IN other words, do not seek to be like the world but seek to see, understand and be shaped into the image and likeness of Jesus through the lifechanging and life-shaping gospel of Jesus Christ. Our passage is about not being conformed to the world, even the religious world when it denies or distorts Jesus like the



Pharisees but to be his disciple and to make disciples by focusing on the weightier and central things of discipleship.

Jesus is confronting the Pharisees, telling them like the child in the story, you have no clothes on! There are seven “woes” he levels at them. They are center on the fact that they are not true disciples of God because they are not disciples of Jesus. Their inside (true identity) does not match the outside (false identity). Our inside and our outside are to match. When they don’t, it is called hypocrisy. Hypocrisy then is to say one thing but to do another. That is, to say you are one thing but live contra to it. Jesus calls the Pharisees “hypocrites” five times and “blind” another five times. To be a hypocrite is to be blind to your condition. Rare is the person who is a hypocrite and knows they are a hypocrite. Thus, Jesus’ question at the end, “How are you to escape being sentenced to hell?” We will walk thru the seven woes, exposing the hypocrisy but also showing its authentic opposite. In its negative form, this is a passage on how not to be a disciple of Jesus, or, living from the outside in. Positively, it is a lesson on how to become and remain a disciple of Jesus by living from the inside out. I will address the seven woes in pairs, with the seventh as a summary indictment. Then we will end with Jesus’ lament and why that is good news and a reason for joyful gratitude today.

Jesus’ first indictment and revealing the inside of the Pharisees being is that they are outside of the kingdom of heaven and that they are not making disciples of the living God but of hell (the Greek word for “hell” means the place of eternal punishment after judgement). This would have infuriated the Pharisees who believed they were the furthest in the kingdom of heaven and the best of making disciples of Yahweh (the Hebrew word for God’s name as given by God himself in the OT). But instead of being the furthest in and the best disciple makers, they were outside and keeping others out by slamming the door on them – from the outside! Jesus says that they have not entered in. How do you enter into the kingdom of heaven? Only in and through Jesus Christ. They were blind because they did not see this (or refused to see this, or could not see this). Jesus says earlier in the chapter to listen to the Pharisees but do not do what they do. They speak a lot of truth but because of their arrogance and pride, like the emperor, they could not see that they were wearing no clothes. Rejecting the very Messiah that they were teaching and proclaiming about was the height of hypocrisy. They could not even recognize the Messiah when he showed up and lived amongst them. I wonder how many of us would recognize Jesus if he showed up today and lived among us? Would we be offended and blind to him if he refused to be Republican, or Democrat? Would we be offended and blind to him if he lived amongst the homeless and sick and outcast? Would we be offended and blind to him if he drove the prices of our homes down or told us to sell our possessions or to give generously and to follow him into suffering and poverty? Can we and do we identify with Jesus of Nazareth, who challenges and confronts and overthrows our worldly ambitions in order to orient us to his kingdom and heavenly ambitions?

The third and fourth woes are directed at their misguided focus. He again calls them hypocrites but now adds the descriptor, “blind guides” as well. What does Jesus point out as concrete examples of their misguided focus? First, he says that they swear but lesser things, the gold and the gift instead of vastly more important things of the temple and the altar. The Pharisees were saying that if you swore by the temple or altar, it meant nothing; meaning the temple and the altar meant nothing. If you



swore by the gold or gifts then your oath was binding and good; it meant something. Jesus says you got it backwards. The temple, the place of God's presence and the altar, the place of sacrifice is more important than the decorative gold or animals offered. They were focusing on the wrong things, lesser things and not on the greater things, bigger things. And that is what he shows in the fourth woe. He says that they tithe which is good but they don't practice justice, mercy, and faithfulness which would be great. Tithing is the lighter thing. Justice, mercy and faithfulness are the weightier things. They majored in the minors and minored in the majors. This he says is like straining the gnat but swallowing the camel! Talk about a vivid image. They were so focused on the minor things (again, not that they were not important) that they missed or didn't have time for the major, weightier things. And Jesus is concerned more about the weightier things and not the lighter things. It is a both / and. Tithe and practice justice, mercy and faithfulness to Jesus. What are you majoring in? What are you minoring in? Do they line up with Jesus of Nazareth and the kingdom of God? How do you know? Has Jesus taught and modeled it? Is Jesus the way and the truth and the life of it?

The fifth and sixth woes focus on the result of pursuing anything other than Jesus or conforming ourselves to the cultural norms of society and religion apart from Jesus of Nazareth. When we focus on the lighter things that are derived from making ourselves look good or just fit into the norms of culture around us so that we might be liked by others and be comfortable and not face difficulty, we become like dirty cups and occupied tombs that have been cleaned up and beautified on the outside. While they look good from the outside, inside there is filth and death. Jesus says that despite their tithing and looking good from the outside with fancy manmade clothing (think also of them praying on the corners with long, sophisticated words that make them look smart and religious), their insides are full of "greed and self-indulgence." Now, greed and self-indulgence are apt and fitting descriptors of life in America where people strive to live the "American Dream." This usually means adequate comfort and security and wealth to do some of the things my heart longs for. In other words, to live for myself and not for Jesus and his kingdom. Can it be both? No. That is why Jesus said it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. We continue to embrace greed, envy, pride, lust, or any other sin disguised in socially acceptable garb of entitlement or merit. The gospel of Jesus transforms us from the inside out so that we no longer pursue small things, empire things, worldly things, selfish things, but that which honors and glorifies our risen and reigning Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The seventh woe ties in the bigger story and drama they find themselves a part. The Pharisees build, visit and decorate the tombs of the prophets who were killed by Jewish leaders and say that they would never do that if they were the ones living at that time. "I would never do that!" How many times have we said that? Jesus is saying don't be too sure. Unless we have been born again, made new creations, made alive in Christ, we are capable of anything. Our sinful nature is still in full control. The same evil that was in Hitler runs through us. Only in Christ is this sinful nature defeated and to whom we are not enslaved anymore. But while defeated, the sinful nature is still dangerous. Even in Christ, we can drift away and rebel and do things from the defeated but dangerous sinful nature. We are not to ignore or underestimate sin and the ease to which we can descend into it. To be obvious as disciples of Jesus we repent and confess our sins, being sorrowful for going against the life and love of God; we fight the good fight of faith and strive to seek first the kingdom of God; we train to be transformed by



the renewing of our minds and to untether ourselves from the false images and ways of the world; we put on Christ.

In the last scene, Jesus laments over Jerusalem, “the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!” (including Jesus in just a couple of days in the story of Matthew). The good news here is Jesus of Nazareth and his compassion for the children of Jerusalem. Jesus longs to gather, protect and nurture them as a “hen gathers her brood under her wings.” What a beautiful image of tender love and protection. But the children of Jerusalem (the Jewish leaders) “are not willing.” They reject Jesus. Jesus says that they will not see him again until they say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” Of course, that is Jesus himself that the phrase refers to. When would this happen or would this happen? Taken literally, this phrase is from Psalm 118 and is known as a “Hallel” Psalm that was recited at the Passover (along with Psalms 113-117). The feast of Passover was only a day away and the Pharisees would literally be saying these words! They would see him shortly after that when they arrest him in the garden of Gethsemane right after the Passover meal. Or, spiritually when they rightly see, understand and receive Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah, as the one who is blessed and who has come in the name of the Lord. This would be seeing him “for the first time” as he really is, for who he is as the Son of David and the Son of God – the long awaited for Messiah! Or, maybe it is both. The good news of Jesus is that he loves us, has compassion for us, both Jews and Gentiles, both rich and poor, both young and old, both white and black, both male and female, both married and unmarried, both white collar and blue collar, both Democrat and Republican, both younger brother and elder brother. He loves us so he gives himself in humility (the practice of low status) to live the perfect life that we could not; die the death that we deserved; to be resurrected to life after life after death so that in him by grace through faith, we too might be raised to new life. Let us not fall onto the pendulum of lostness as younger or elder brothers but remain in Jesus, the Third Way that redeems us from the pendulum of lostness so that we are found and are accepted and belong forever with him. Amen.

Communion Meditation

As we meditate on the act of communion that we miss out on because of Covid, may we recognize that because of Jesus, everything is different; including death itself.

Professing: (Apostles Creed)

**We believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.
We believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
Born of the virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose and ascended to heaven
Where he is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come to judge the living and the dead.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

Proclaiming: 1 Corinthians 11:23b-25 (Paraphrased)



On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it saying, “this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” After the meal he took the cup of wine and pouring it out said, “this wine is my blood, a new covenant of grace poured out for the forgiveness of sins.”

Remember and believe that the body & blood of Jesus was given & shed for the forgiveness of sins.

Song Sing To The King -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WnFVXynXWSU>

*Sing to the King who is coming to reign
Glory to Jesus the Lamb that was slain
Life and salvation, His empire shall bring
Joy to the nations when Jesus is King*

*Come let us sing a song
A song declaring we belong to Jesus
He is all we need
Lift up a heart of praise
Sing now with voices raised to Jesus
Sing to the King*

*For his returning we watch and we pray
We will be ready the dawn of that day
We'll join in singing with all the redeemed
Satan is vanquished and Jesus is King!*

*Come let us sing a song
A song declaring we belong to Jesus
He is all we need
Lift up a heart of praise
Sing now with voices raised to Jesus
Sing to the King*

*Come let us sing a song
A song declaring we belong to Jesus
He is all we need
Lift up a heart of praise
Sing now with voices raised to Jesus
Sing to the King*

Sending as Disciples of Jesus: Matthew 28:18-20 (Paraphrased)

Because of Jesus, we are loved. Because of Jesus we are free. Because of Jesus we are new creations in him. Because of Jesus we have the Holy Spirit living in us to empower and equip us to be his disciples today. May we embrace our identity in Christ. May we live for the inside out by putting on Christ in love and grace and truth.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. Therefore, as we are sent into the world by him, let us make disciples of all, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us. And let us remember and treasure that Jesus is with us always, even to the end of the age. Amen!