

Singing In the Reign

A Worship Service Celebrating Jesus' Parables and Teachings in the Gospel of Luke.

Mt Vernon UMC, Reign of Christ, Nov 20, 2022

Words by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette.

GREETINGS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

OPENING PRAYER

PRELUDE & CANDLES Tell Me the Stories of Jesus

Introduction to the Parables of Jesus in Luke

Today we celebrate the Reign of Christ. Since Jesus Christ reigns over our lives, today we will be “Singing in the Reign” – that is, “singing in the reign of God.”

When Jesus wanted to describe the reign of God, he often used parables — stories about ordinary things that were part of ordinary people's lives.

These stories told of something bigger. They told of God's love, God's intention for the world, and the ways in which God is working among us.

We will be reading, singing, and praying over some of Jesus' parables and teachings that are found in Luke's gospel. Each one of these stories teaches us something important about the kingdom, or the reign, of God.

Please note that, since we'll be doing a lot of singing, you are invited to remain seated for most of the hymns.

Please join in reading our responsive Call to Worship:

Call To Worship

Jesus told stories about new wine and old wineskins,
about people building houses and building obedience,
about helpers, friends, enemies, wise people and fools,
about proud people, stubborn people,
rich and poor people.

Jesus told stories about God's wonderful welcome. He said God's reign is
like a party, and everybody is invited in.

We are invited ... our neighbors are invited ... our enemies are welcome,
too.

As we hear the stories of Jesus,
may we find both joy and challenge in them.

Let us worship God, as together we hear
the story of God's reign.

Hymn

Jesus' Wondrous Words of Grace

(All hymn pages will be replaced during printing.)

READER:

All of this welcoming by Jesus means that we are called to new ways of understanding the world — and new ways of responding to God and neighbors. Jesus said that if we are too rigid, too unwilling to change, too harsh and judging of others, we're going to miss out on the good news of God's love. If we are loving, humble, and willing to turn our lives around, then God's way of love will "fit" us just fine. He put it this way:

READER:

Luke 5:33-39

No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new wine, but says, "The old is good."

READER:

God wants the very best for us. Jesus gave us the parables to teach us about God's loving ways.

READER:

Do the Good News stories of Jesus "fit" with our way of living and thinking in this world today? If it turns out they don't fit us, then we're the ones who need to change — not Jesus.

Confession

Luke 6:46-49

Jesus said, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I tell you? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built." ... But the second one did not build on a firm foundation. He reminds us of the way we too often live. Let us confess our sins together:

Loving God, we confess that we are often like the second builder — the one who built a house without a firm foundation. "When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house." Lord, there are times we hear your words but do not follow them. There are times we aren't willing to dig into your word. There are times our efforts are shallow. Forgive us. Help us to build a solid foundation of faith by hearing your words deeply, and by acting on them daily. (Silent Prayer)

Assurance

Luke 7:36-50

Friends, hear the good news. God forgives us! Jesus told a story about two people who were in debt to the same rich person. One owed a lot of money, and the other owed even more than we can imagine. The rich person forgave them both. Which one would be more grateful — the one who was forgiven a large debt, or the one who was forgiven more than could be repaid in a lifetime?

God is a God who forgives — even if we think our sin is too big to pardon!

No matter what we've done wrong, God is ready to wipe the slate clean. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and called to live new lives of faith, obedience and joy!

Hymn

Like Lamps on the Lamp Stand

Sharing the Peace of Christ

God offers us the gift of peace through our Lord Jesus Christ: The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

(Share the peace of Christ with one another)

Prayer for Illumination

In our worship, before we read the scripture, we ask God's Spirit to guide us, so that God's word will take root in our lives and we will respond in faithfulness. Today, we sing this prayer, remembering Jesus' Parable of the Sower who went out sowing seeds:

Hymn

Christ Taught Us of a Farmer

READER:

God's reign is about hearing God's Word and following it. It's also about neighborliness — and understanding "neighbor" in a new way.

READER:

Luke 10:25-37

Listen to the gospel as it is found in Luke 10:25-37: Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Hymn

Who Is My Neighbor?

READER:

"Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy."
Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

READER:

God's reign is about seeing grace and goodness in those we don't normally think of as our neighbors. It's also about growth and change that comes in surprising ways:

Children's Message

The Mustard Seed

READER:

God's reign is about growth and change. It's also about generosity and sharing. Jesus says we need to get our priorities straight. Listen to the Parable of the Rich Fool, found in Luke 12:13-21:

READER:

Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

Hymn

Bigger Barns

READER:

God's reign is about living generously toward others. We are part of the reign of God when we make sure everyone has a fair share of the world's possessions.

READER:

Sometimes it was the bad news of the world that led Jesus to talk about the good news of the reign of God. One day, people came to Jesus and told him about some violence that Pilate had done against people who were gathered for worship. Jesus used the occasion to tell them they should look at their own lives and the changes they needed to make, while they still had the time. God's reign has a sense of urgency about it. (Luke 13:1-5)

Hymn

One Day the News was Grim

READER:

Luke 13:6-9

Then Jesus told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?" He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down."

READER:

It's always the right time to change our ways. It's always the right time to love God and to love our neighbors. It's always the right time to be fruitful Christians. The reign of God is about making changes here and now.

READER:

Luke 14:15-24

Sometimes, though, Jesus simply described the reign of God as a party. Jesus told a parable explaining who is invited to be part of God's great feast of love and welcome. Look around you. Here in this place, do you see people mostly like yourself? The folks that God welcomes may come as a big surprise to us all.

READER:

Jesus told us to imagine a rich person inviting all kinds of important guests to a special dinner. The rich, the powerful and the privileged decline the invitation. Take a look at the ones that God welcomes in:

READER: ... children who are without homes or families

READER: ... people who are abused and terrified ...

READER: people who are poor and struggling to feed their families ...

READER: people who are told they are sinful, disgraceful, shameful, not welcome ...

READER: people who are on the outside of fences, buildings, communities, and churches, looking in ...

READER: people who have been pushed aside ...

READER: the refugees fleeing through the desert or across the sea, and those being held in detention camps ...

READER: people the world has forgotten ...

Offering

A King Planned a Party

Hymn

O God, As You Welcome Us into Your Kingdom

Offering Prayer:

Loving God, we thank you for the many blessings we enjoy every day. Now we bring our gifts to you — our tithes and our offerings, and we pray that they will be used to show the world the good news of your reign. Amen.

READER:

God's reign is about welcoming the outcasts and those who are lost. Again and again, Jesus welcomed the outsider. He ate with sinners and tax collectors. He spent time with the people that everyone else despised. He taught his followers to do the same. What does this look like in our world today? What do Jesus' words say to us as a church?

READER:

Jesus told three lost and found parables. These are found in Luke 15. God is like a shepherd who has one hundred sheep. When one gets lost, the shepherd leaves the 99 to go and to find the lost one. When he finds it, he rejoices.

READER:

God is like a woman who has ten coins. When she loses one of them, she sweeps her house until she finds it. Every last one is important to her. When she finds it, she celebrates with her friends.

READER:

God is like a Father who loves his wandering son but lets him go. When the son returns, the Father runs out to greet him. The child is never far away from the parent's love. In God's reign, every one of us is precious to God.

Hymn

God's Great Love Is So Amazing

Affirmation of Faith

Luke 13:20-21

God's reign is filled with surprises. The people on the outside will be welcomed in, and the people on the inside will find their own choices have set them on the outside. It's all because God is working in our lives and our world to bring the change that is needed. Please join in our Affirmation of Faith that comes from Luke 13 — Jesus' Parable of the Yeast.

I believe that the kingdom of God is like yeast, that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.

I believe the leaven changes the bread.

I believe that we are called to be the leaven in God's world.

In a world that accepts the way things are — the same old violence, the same old hatreds, the same old injustices — we are called to be agents of change.

We are called to bring justice and peace, forgiveness and love, community and compassion.

In a world that is afraid to change, we are called to bring growth. We are called to bring life. We are called to make a difference. We are called to be leaven in the bread.

READER:

Jesus said that the reign of God is about welcoming in the poor. He told the story of a rich man — we don't know his name — and of a poor man named Lazarus. The rich man had all kinds of privilege. He had everything handed to him. His life was so sheltered he didn't even pay any attention to Lazarus begging at his gate. Imagine his surprise when they both died — and Lazarus was welcomed into the gates of heaven, while the rich man was suffering the agonies of hell. The hell was one he brought upon himself. It comes whenever we put walls between ourselves and our neighbors, and therefore between ourselves and God. (Luke 16:19-31)

Hymn

God, We Build Our Own Divisions

READER:

God's reign is not a way of pride; it is a way of humility. None of us can ever earn God's love. We can only gratefully accept it as a free gift. Jesus told a parable about two men who were praying in the Temple:

Hymn

A Pharisee Was Praying

READER:

God's reign is something we are called to seek persistently — like a friend who knocks on your door at midnight asking for three loaves of bread. That friend keeps on knocking until you come and offer help. So we're called to never give up. We're called to keep on seeking what God is doing. (Luke 11:5-8)

Hymn

O God, May We Keep Praying

READER:

God's reign is something we are called to seek persistently, like a widow who insists on justice from an unjust judge. We're called to never give up. We're called to keep on seeking what God is doing. (Luke 18:1-8)

Hymn

May We Be Like the Widow

READER:

What are the things we need to ask of God, persistently? What are the things we need to seek and never give up on? Let us pray:

The Lord's Prayer

Luke 11:2-4

Responsive Reading

Jesus told other parables, too ... about light, and the light of God in us ...

"Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light; but if it is not healthy, your body is full of darkness. Therefore consider whether the light in you is not darkness." (Luke 11:34-36)

... about salt ...

"Salt is good; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; they throw it away." (Luke 14:34-35)

... about suddenness and surprise ...

"But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour." (Luke 12:35-40)

... about God's generous love and our thankful response. We are blessed and called to be a blessing ...

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Luke 12:32-34)

Hymn

Don't Fear, Little Flock

SENDING FORTH:

In all of the parables that Jesus told, he gave us glimpses of the reign of God
— a glimpse of the world that God is bringing into being.

It is a reign of peace and justice and love ...

it is a reign that catches us by surprise ...

it is a celebration of welcome for everyone ...

it is a reign that calls for commitment on our part.

Go in peace, and be a part of God's reign that is coming ... and that, in Christ,
is already here.

Upcoming Ministry Opportunities

Quarter Tube for Daily Bread Soup Kitchen	Today!
IGRC Reorg listening session (virtual)	7pm 10/26
Trunk or Treat	4-6:30pm 10/29
IGRC Reorg listening session (in-person)	Champaign
Faith UMC, 2pm 10/30	
Helping Hands Donation	11/6
All Saints Day (send photos to Mary Kae)	11/6
Church Conference	Danville First
UMC, 2:15-4:45pm, 11/12	

Recent and Upcoming Birthdays

~~Jeff Darling, Lisa Heiken, Christa Steeves, Noah Arbuckle~~

For more information about these and other activities, check your email for
This Week at Mt. Vernon. If you don't receive *This Week at Mt. Vernon*,
please let us know.

Next Sunday:

 TBD

 TBD

<<Mission Statement>>.

To learn more, visit [<<Facebook>>](https://facebook.com/)

If you would like a prayer, a visit, a meal, to have Holy Communion brought to
your home, or have any other need, please contact any church member or Pastor
Rob (<<Phone Number>>, <<Email>>).