

Order of Worship for May 15, 2022

Prelude

P: Jesus Christ is risen!

C: He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Opening Hymn: “*Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee*” - Hymn #803

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

P: When we were baptized, we died and were buried with Christ.

C: We were baptized so that we might have a new life, as Christ was raised to life by the glory of God the Father.

P: Therefore, let us confess our sins to God so that He may turn us from our sinful ways to follow Christ in true obedience.

P: Almighty and all-merciful God,

C: we are dead in trespasses and sin; we have no power to rise. We have offended Your majesty and defied Your divinity; we have brought death and darkness where You once said, "Let there be light." We deserve the doom that You have decreed. We are dead in trespasses and sin; we have no power to rise.

P: But Christ is risen.

C: Risen indeed!

P: Since we have been united with Him in a death like His,

C: we will certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. For His sake, we implore You: forgive our sins, and re-direct our lives according to Your purpose. Let us be raised with Christ.

P: "Thus it is written, that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins must be proclaimed in his name." That Word is now proclaimed to you. Your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen! Alleluia!

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm

P: Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for He has done marvelous things!

C: His right hand and His holy arm have worked salvation for Him.

P: The LORD has made known His salvation;

C: He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.

P: He has remembered His steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel.

C: All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

P: Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth;
C: break forth into joyous song and sing praises!

P: Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre
C: with the lyre and the sound of melody!

P: With trumpets and the sound of the horn
C: make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD!

All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for He has done marvelous things!
C: His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for Him.

P: The Lord be with you.
C: And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray. O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise, that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen

Hymn of Praise: *“Jesus Lives! The Victory’s Won”*- **Hymn #490**, vs. 1, 5

First Reading: Acts 11:1–18

R: Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.” But Peter began and explained it to them in order: “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me. Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. And I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ But I said, ‘By no means, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ But the voice answered a second time from heaven, ‘What God has made clean, do not call common.’ This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven. And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.’ As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit

fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If then God gave the same gift to them as He gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."

R: This is the Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle: Revelation 21:1–7

R: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And He who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also He said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son."

R: This is the Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

Holy Gospel: John 16:12–22

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 16th chapter

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: [Jesus said:] "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that He will take what is mine and declare it to you. A little while, and you will see Me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see Me." So some of His disciples said to one another, "What is this that He says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I am going to the Father'?" So they were saying, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what He is talking about." Jesus knew that they wanted to ask Him, so He said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'In a little while and you will not see Me, and again in a little while and you will see Me'? Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into

the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.”

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon Hymn: “*Jerusalem, My Happy Home*” – **Hymn #673**

Sermon: “*The New Jerusalem*” - **Revelation 21**

Those who work with stories know there are two basic types of stories; comedies and tragedies. If a story ends in a funeral, it’s a tragedy. If it ends in a wedding, it’s a comedy. Not a comedy in terms of laughter, but in terms of joy, of a happy ending. That’s why the Bible doesn’t end with a funeral, not even a “ruined” one like the ones Jesus attends where he raises the dead and ends the need for the funeral. Instead, the Bible ends with a wedding. It ends with a marriage celebration full of joy, one that celebrates God not just visiting his people, but living with us, dwelling with us, forever.

That’s what we see as we jump ahead to the penultimate chapter of Revelation. John uses two images to describe what happens here. The first image is the city itself, Jerusalem. We’re shown a picture of a new, different, perfect one, but it’s based on all that we know about the old, earthly Jerusalem. The second image is that Jerusalem comes down like a bride. All cleaned up, beautified beyond belief. A homecoming and a wedding, all in one.

Jerusalem comes from two Hebrew words that together mean “foundation of peace.” Unfortunately, the city rarely lived up to that name. It might be the city that Melchizidek comes from, who is just described as coming from “Salem” which means “peace.” Jerusalem’s first mention in full comes as Joshua and the Israelites are going through the land, conquering the various city states that are there. After that, the Old Testament’s mentions of Jerusalem are full of descriptions of civil wars and coups, insurrections and invasions. Extra biblical world history isn’t much kinder. Even today there seems to be at best an uneasy peace between the three world religions and two main ethnic groups that claim Jerusalem as theirs.

But Jerusalem, of all the cities in the world, is important because it’s where God chose to dwell. It’s where God chose to live with His people in the temple. It’s where God chose to have the most important event of the world happen. It’s where Jesus died, and rose again. No other spot on Earth can claim that honor.

As Americans, our capital evokes that same mix of emotions. School kids take field trips to see the great historical monuments there, to see the impressive buildings that our government is located in. Yet it’s also a city we joke about as full of sin and corruption, with buildings barricaded and fenced off due to protestors and rioters. It’s a city that has been the source of great justice and aspirations, yet also the source of great injustice and cynicism.

And so as John begins to wrap up Revelation, he ends with Jerusalem. Not the old, earthly one, with all of its warts and blemishes. Instead, he ends with the New Jerusalem. The city whose gates never need to be shut, because there is no night and no threat of invasion.

This final vision shows John, and us, the city of God, descending from heaven, dressed as a bride adorned for her bridegroom. At this point, John's visions cease and we find him with his face buried in the earth, bowing in worship. And when he finally does speak, all he can say is "Come. Come Lord Jesus. Come."

That's what lies at the heart of John's vision. The foolish intimacy of God. John's vision is not just about a bride but about a bride and a bridegroom and the intimacy of God. John's vision starts with a large landscape, a new heaven and a new earth.

Then he takes us in closer to see the New Jerusalem, the holy city, descending as a bride from heaven. Then we get closer still, before the very throne of God, and we hear God the Father speak for the second time in Revelation. And he says, "Behold the dwelling of God is with his people." God is dwelling with his people. God has chosen to spend eternity with you. In Christ, God's love is eternally wrapped up with the lives of his people . . . for better for worse. Though we try to turn him into a servant in our self-help programs. Though we become argumentative and ugly in our mission to save the church. Though we, the bride of Christ, becomes Bridezilla, fighting against Christ the bridegroom and his family, and though she does everything she can to destroy her own wedding, even to the point of killing her bridegroom, still, he loves. He comes, he dies, and in that murder is the mystery of our marriage. You are a bride . . . drop-dead gorgeous . . . because Christ died for you.

Nothing you do could ever make you into a bride. Even in this love is love, everything goes culture we're in, you can't make yourself a bride. You are a bride because someone loves you. Some fool promises to be with you for the rest of his life. For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, he will forsake all others and love you, even laying down his life for you.

And that image of sacrificial love, of undeserved love that comes from outside you, is the image God has used to describe his love for his people throughout the Bible. I had an Old Testament professor in seminary who said that God and the people of Israel were only dating until after the Exodus. On Mount Sinai, where the covenant was signed, they got married. Paul continued to use that image to describe how Christ loves the church. And now John continues that same image.

Everything Christ has ever done has been done in love for you. His life, his death, his resurrection . . . for you. You stand here in the righteousness of Christ, beautiful in his baptism, glorious in his grace, and he promises to come and reveal this to the world. Until that time, he has given you this little vision in your mental sky. It's there so that you will always remember who you are. The bride of Christ, God's own creation.

As the bride of Christ, then, we look ahead to that New Jerusalem, the new heaven and the new earth. We look ahead to when creation will be restored. We look ahead to when we will dwell with God, when God will dwell with us. We look ahead in faith.

As Christians—God's forgiven people—we "desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one" (Hebrews 11:16a). By faith we look forward to a new heaven and a new earth. And by faith we look for the City of God, the New Jerusalem that will come down to earth from heaven on the

Last Day. Ghostly ballplayers may think that Iowa is heaven as they play on the Field of Dreams, but we know heaven is more than that.

Jerusalem is our happy home—not Ames, not Iowa, not the United States, not even earth as we know it, or heaven as we imagine it. By faith we are “looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10). Ultimately, “our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20).

God comes down to earth in the New Jerusalem. God comes again to dwell with his people. God will not leave. Sin will no longer separate us from God or each other. We will be His people, He will be our God, and nothing will ever change that ever again. What a wonderful promise.

Nicene Creed (on screen)

Prayer of the Church

P: Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

Sharing Our Ministry

Offering and Voluntary

Service of the Sacrament

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them up to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: It is good and proper so to do.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

P: Lord God Almighty, heavenly Father, You have promised that we will join You in the new, heavenly Jerusalem when Jesus comes again. We thank You for sending Jesus into this world to die outside the gates of the earthly Jerusalem so our sins could die with Him. We praise You for raising Him from the dead so that we too will rise to enter that New Jerusalem. Give us Your Holy Spirit so that we join in the wonderful meal of Christ’s body and blood trusting that by it our sins are forgiven. We pray this in Jesus’ name.

C: Amen.

The Words of our Lord (pastor)

Lord’s Prayer

P: The peace of the Lord be with you all.

C: Amen.

Distribution of Holy Communion

“Come, Let Us Join Our Cheerful Songs” - Hymn #812

“Jerusalem, O City Fair and High” - Hymn #674

Dismissal

Children’s Message

Blessing of the Seed and Soil

P: While earth remains, there will be day and night, summer and winter, planting and harvest, cold and heat. For as the rain and snow come down from heaven and do not return until they have watered the earth, making it blossom and bear fruit, and give seed for sowing and bread to eat, so shall the Word, which comes from God prevail.

C: It shall not return to Him fruitless without accomplishing His purpose of succeeding with the task He gave it.

P: Lord of springtime and harvest, bless these plants as symbols of the seed that is sown throughout the world that it may nourish and sustain Your people. And so water the soil with Your gentle rain and warm it with Your golden sunshine, that it may bear fruit to the glory of Your name and the welfare of Your people.

C: Amen.

Children and Youth Dismissed to Plant Flowers

Prayer After Communion

P: Lord Jesus Christ, we come to Your table, receiving more than a meal.

C: We receive a vision of heaven's high and holy feast.

P: Inspire us, by this vision, to live lives of service...

C: to live lives of love.

P: We bless You now and evermore.

C: Amen.

Blessing (Pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: “In Thee Is Gladness” - Hymn #818