

The St. John's Pulpit

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SAVING GRACE

Gospel of Matthew 25:31-40

Christ the King Sunday, November 26, 2017
The Rev. Dennis W. Foust, PhD, Senior Minister



Life is filled with stories. During Thanksgiving, you shared many stories. For a few moments, consider 'STORY' as God's story; 'Story' as the story of Christ's Church; and 'story' as your individual story.

Today is the last Sunday of the Christian Year, an annual series of seasons retelling the STORY of God's Saving Grace revealed in Jesus Christ. Next Sunday, on the first Sunday of Advent, we enter a new Christian Year with Hanging of the Green. Our beautiful sanctuary will be filled with sounds and symbols of the Advent season.

The Christian Year begins with Advent; a season inviting us to prepare room for Jesus Christ. Then we celebrate Christmas prior to six weeks of Epiphany proclaiming Jesus' Good News. Forty days of Lent introduce us to spiritual reflection, confession, repentance and renewal. On Easter Sunday, and for the next six weeks, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Fifty days after Easter Sunday, we observe Pentecost, the Church's experience of God as Spirit. For most of the summer, we focus on the work of God's Spirit in the Church. After Labor Day, we move to focus more on the God's work in the world through the Church. The Christian Year retells God's STORY of 'Saving Grace' as the Story of Christ's Church.

Each time we read the St. John's Covenant, we are reminded of our church's Story. More than 95 years ago, those charter members started writing a story which we now steward. This story begins with our unity in Christ expressed as worship, spiritual growth, community of faith, financial stewardship, joyful Christian witness and active servant faith. Our covenant concludes with these words: "*we try to do that which pleases Thee, to the glory of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.*" We are grateful that Jesus Christ is the lead actor in our church's Story. We are continuing to write a Story that we will pass along to future generations.

This past year, we have followed Jesus in many ways. We are investing our lives in the STORY of God's Saving Grace. In the past few days, I spoke again with Dr. Clifford Jones about our efforts in Circles of Hope and the inter-racial relationship groups we have initiated. And, beloved, we are just beginning to be transformed in our reinvigorated efforts of being a servant church through MT25. It is apropos for us to conclude this Christian Year by remembering this significant scripture passage of Matthew 25. In Jesus' parable, the king affirms those who feed the hungry, serve the thirsty, care for the sick, welcome the stranger, clothe and shelter the poor and visit the prisoner. In a world of competing allegiances, we are committed to Jesus, our supreme authority, our 'king;' Lord of our faith.

This week, we gathered around a meal expressing our gratitude to God for life's blessings. Today, we gather around The Lord's Table for the meal reminding us of God's Saving Grace. We conclude this year of worship by singing 'The Lord's Prayer.' I challenge you to pray this prayer each day during this last week of the Christian Year. Let us write our story by paraphrasing one line from the Lord's Prayer, "...Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done **in me** as it is in heaven;" "...Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done **in me** as it is in heaven." Amen & AMEN.