



Queen Anne

LUTHERAN CHURCH

Called to Proclaim God's Love in Christ for Every Person

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✧ *In Worship Today* ✧

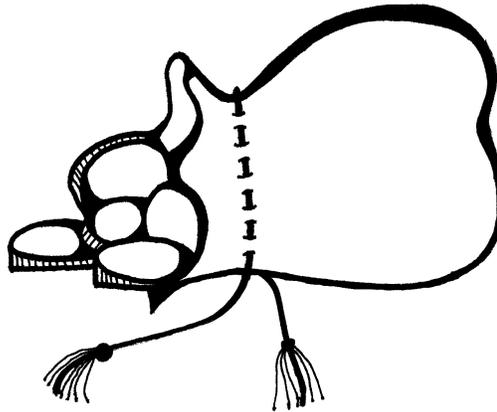
Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Dan Peterson
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Assisting Minister	Carol Ann Davis

This service of worship can also be heard as audio online. Go to queenannelutheran.org and click on "WORD OUT" to find audio, video, and print resources for worship at home.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

October 18, 2020

"Word Out" audio transcript



Prelude Two chorale preludes on KREMSER by twentieth-century composers
Healey Willan (1880–1968)
Flor Peeters (1903–1986)

Welcome

P: Welcome, this twentieth Sunday after Pentecost. Wherever you are listening, however you may be struggling, we invite you into this space: one where you can hear the good news in proclamation, spoken and sung; a time where you can be still, and know God is God.

In today's Gospel, the Pharisees try to trap Jesus, after he has condemned them in a series of parables. Is it right, they ask, to pay a tax to the emperor? Jesus tells them to give the emperor what belongs to him and to God what belongs to God. To gather for worship and live, as Christ did, for others, reminds us that our ultimate allegiance is to God rather than to any earthly authority.

Greeting

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

G: **And also with you.**

Gospel Acclamation

Philippians 2:15,16

C:

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Repeat alleluia

A: Shine like stars in the world,
holding fast to the word of life.

C:

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

The Holy Gospel:

Matthew 22:15-22

A: The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the twenty-second chapter.

C: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

A: ¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap [Jesus] in what he said. ¹⁶So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not

regard people with partiality. ¹⁷Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" ¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" ²¹They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." ²²When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

A: The Gospel of the Lord.

G: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

We Need the Good News

Pastor Dan Peterson

Today's Gospel is a disappointment. It's not that Jesus fails to outwit his opponents – the crowd's reaction alone clearly indicates otherwise. It's that the story itself contains nothing of the gospel, the good news, the message of God's nearness to us, especially during times in life when we feel it the least.

Now, more than ever, we need to hear the good news. The pandemic, which seems endless, has cut deeply into the fabric of our lives. The specter of climate change looms over us as fires continue to rage throughout California, turning once blue skies into an eerie, apocalyptic mixture of orange and gray. Hurricanes ravage the east, and between the coasts, conflict ensues over the issue of police brutality and systemic racism. Partisanship divides us to a degree not seen perhaps since the Civil War, and democracy ostensibly hangs in the balance as politicians cast doubt upon the fairness of the forthcoming election and with it the delicate transfer of power.

In times like these, we need reassurance. We need hope. We need to hear the good news. I know I do, and my family does, too.

Last month, I was fortunate to spend several weeks with my mom and dad in California. Against the backdrop of everything I just described – the fires, the social unrest, the partisanship – we received additional news that was anything but good: the medication my mother takes for her cancer has stopped working. The doctor says she has a year to live.

The news was devastating. Sure, we knew it was coming; we just hoped, as so many others in our situation do, for a little extra time. A more optimistic second opinion helped buffer the news of the first, but the bottom-line remained: the relative calm introduced several years ago by a miracle-drug that had just been cleared by the F.D.A. was now going to be replaced by heavy clouds of uncertainty with respect to the future. It is weather none of us want to endure, a journey absolutely no one – myself included – wants to take.

I disclose this rather personal news with you for several reasons. First, as one of our beloved quilters, Shirley, said to me at the beginning of my ministry at Queen Anne Lutheran, we are family. To use a biblical metaphor, we are the body of Christ, and because of that we look out for each other. We “bear one another’s burdens,” as Paul says in Galatians 6:2, making one another the priority instead of simply and solely looking out for ourselves (see Philippians 2:4). You have done that for my family and me through kind words, prayers, and cards since I initially learned my mother’s cancer had returned in 2016 and I am grateful for your words.

The second reason I share this news with you is transparency. It has been my approach from the beginning to be as honest and forthright with you as possible regarding my mom’s situation given the effect it has upon my family and me, per the advice of our former bishop, Kirby Unti. Upon my return to Seattle early this month I accordingly shared this information with council and staff. Now I share it with you: until the new year I plan, with one exception, to remain in Seattle, after which council has kindly pledged to work with me however the situation unfolds. It is possible, for example, that my mother may come to Seattle and stay with me for clinical

trials. Nothing is fixed, and I will continue to update you as circumstances dictate.

The third and final reason I share this information with you is solidarity. Multiple individuals in our faith community find themselves at a similar place due to cancer or other life-threatening illnesses. I think of Linda, one of the kindest human beings I have ever met, as she faces wave after wave of complication associated with her chemotherapy. I think of Debbie, who recently underwent surgery for the same type of cancer my mother has, and I think of Janice, Virginia's mother, now nearing the end of her life in hospice care. In each instance, the path I am walking magnifies my concern for those in similar circumstances. Only God can take away the sting of death, as Paul refers to it in 1 Corinthians 15:55, but we can be there for each other and face what we all must face together.

Fortunately, Matthew's Jesus offers good news at least when it comes to community and fellowship in Christ. "For where two or three are gathered in my name," he promises, "I am there among them." Unfortunately, our Gospel reading for today offers nothing specifically even close to that. It's as if we have to go elsewhere in the Bible for good news – to Paul, who speaks in Romans of how nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ, not even death (8:38-39); to the Psalmist, who affirms that even though we walk through death's valley, God accompanies us, freeing us from fear (23:4); or to John, who proclaims God's desire to save the world, rather than judge or condemn it. Is there nothing, then, of the good news in today's reading, or might we squeeze even a little gospel out of this otherwise hell-happy evangelist? (I say "hell-happy" because Matthew's Gospel refers to hell more than any other writing in the New Testament.)

The good news, I believe, is that we can. When Jesus evades the trap the Pharisees set for him in v. 22, he offers a glimpse of how his *teaching* can enable us to live more freely in the world and thus come to us as good news.

The Pharisees, we recall, ask Jesus a loaded question. Is it lawful as a person of faith to pay taxes to Caesar? Answer in the affirmative and Jesus

offends the majority of his followers who resist Rome; answer in the negative and he subjects himself and his followers to the extreme penalties of not paying taxes. Jesus apparently has no way out: defy Rome or offend those who resist it. The Pharisees, it would seem, gain control.

The “miracle” of this story is that Jesus *does* find a way: render to each, he says, what belongs to each. The crowd responds with amazement. A new alternative, a third option, appears. An imperial tax, as Warren Carter points out, “can be paid without the payment being a support for Rome” and the profound cruelty it dealt in particular with the people of its occupied territories, of which Jesus’ Palestine was one. His followers, in other words, could continue to resist the empire in subtle ways, without subjecting themselves to its penalties unnecessarily.

It’s the response of the crowd in today’s Gospel that helps bring out the good news. The narrator uses the word “amazed,” which – together with “astounded” and “awe” – describes the reaction of various people to Jesus at twelve times, according to Matthe’s gospel, throughout his ministry. Seven of these refer to miracles he performs: the exorcism of spirits, the curing of disease, the restoration of faculties (healing, seeing) and the alteration of nature (the mysterious wilting of a fig tree and the calming of the Sea of Galilee). Five, however, describe the response of people to what Jesus says, or, in the case of his appearance before Pilate, to what he doesn’t (see 27:14).

Jesus, we discover, not only heals by power or touch. He frees us, too, with his teaching, which repeatedly produced amazement among those around him. In today’s Gospel he offers his followers a third way, a new possibility none of them foresaw. Imagine if you had been freed as Jesus’ followers were in that moment, knowing you could retain your allegiance to God and the alternative kingdom Jesus had been manifesting without suffering the severe consequences that would arise if you failed to pay your tribute to Rome and its Caesar.

It’s the spirit of this third way that marks the good news of Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel. Just when it seems like there is no way out, sometimes

a new and redeeming possibility appears. That might be something for us to hold tight as we approach election day, but it applies as well to my situation and the example of others from our congregation I provided.

None of us know what the days and weeks to come will bring, but we do know the comfort that life together can bring. For me this means that while I don't have the emotional bandwidth to answer questions about my mother's health in group settings, I always welcome your prayers and words of support individually. Cards, emails, and phone calls (when desired) can be an incredibly powerful way to help others here, too. We need the good news; short of that, we need company.

Jesus' response to the Pharisees shows us that sometimes good news comes with the introduction of a possibility we never considered before.

Today I pray that we be open to new possibilities:

Dear God, when a door seems closed or a window shut, give us the mind, the will, and the strength to us seek out alternatives for healing. And when all doors are finally closed to healing, at least in this life, help us render to you what is yours, as Jesus says in today's Gospel, placing our faith and confidence in you.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Hymn of the Day

We Praise You, O God

ELW 870

1 We praise you, O God, our re - deem - er, cre - a - tor;
2 We wor - ship you, God of our fa - thers and mo - thers;
3 With voic - es u - nit - ed our prais - es we of - fer

in grate - ful de - vo - tion our trib - ute we bring.
through tri - al and tem - pest our guide you have been.
and glad - ly our songs of thanks - giv - ing we raise.

We lay it be - fore you; we kneel and a - dore you;
When per - ils o'er - take us, you will not for - sake us,
With you, Lord, be - side us, your strong arm will guide us.

we bless your ho - ly name; glad prais - es we sing.
and with your help, O Lord, our strug - gles we win.
To you, our great re - deem - er, for - ev - er be praise!

Prayers of the Church

A: With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

A: Gracious God, you call us by name and invite us to share your good news. Send your Holy Spirit among preachers, missionaries, and evangelists. We give thanks for the witness of your servant Luke, the evangelist, whom the church commemorates today. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: God of praise, the heavens and all creation declare your salvation. From the rising of the sun to its setting, may the whole universe show forth your goodness. Raise up devoted stewards of all that you have made. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: God of all, may your word of justice sound forth in every place. Restore divided nations and communities with reconciling truth. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: God of light, we pray for those living with pain, illness, isolation, grief, anger, or doubt. Join their voices in a new song, assuring them that you call them each by name. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: God of truth, you show no partiality. May your spirit guide the work of justices, magistrates, court officials, and all vocations of the law, that your promise of restoration may be known. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: For whom or what else do the people of God pray?

A silence is given so that your prayers may be offered.

A: Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

A: Living God, as you raised Jesus from the dead, so raise up those who have died in you. We give thanks for their witness, confident of your rescuing welcome for all. Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

A: Listen as we call on you, O God, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

C: **Our Father in heaven,**

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,

now and forever.

Amen.

Announcements

P: We thank you for joining us for this service. If you would like to hear other services or access the newest edition of *the Quill*, our newsletter, we invite you to go to our website at queenannelutheran.org.

P: Receive now the blessing:

Benediction

A: Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

P: Almighty God, the Father, † the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
bless and preserve you.

G: Amen.

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

G: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

A short fanfare for organ
Healey Willan