

The Days Are Surely Coming

INTRODUCTION

We are bringing Liturgical Year C to an end with this series. Instead of dwelling on the end, however, we are encouraging a look ahead. We return to the promises of God, the promise of a new reality, a new hope, and an ongoing presence that will usher all of creation into this new kingdom and kin-dom of relationship and joy. It is, in a way, a pre-Advent anticipation that ends with a celebration of the Reign of Christ or Christ the King Sunday. Though this series is grounded in the Hebrew scripture lectionary texts, Christ is the center of our worship and the ground of our hope. Let us be reminded that the days are surely coming when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost – *The Latter Splendor*

November 9, 2025

[Haggai 2:1-9](#)

Color – Green

WORSHIP PLANNING

Leaning into the invitation of Advent before the season actually begins allows the worshipping community to consider the promise of the kingdom apart from the machinery of Christmas. Whether you call this series an extended Advent or pre-Advent or not even make the connection out loud is up to the worship team. (If you want to know more about the seven-week Advent proposal, check out the North American Academy of Liturgy's Advent Project at <https://www.theadventproject.org/index.htm>.)

The invitation of this series is to look to a future that resembles the kingdom that Jesus spoke of. He used parables and images to hint at what living in that kind of relationship would be like. There are aspects of the community of faith that resemble this kingdom or kin-dom living. Telling some of those stories in worship could give a glimpse into this promised future. At its best, the church rallies around those who are hurting, brings them into fellowship, and offers comfort and sustenance for the difficult experiences. Many churches rise to the occasion when there is a death in the family or the community, especially a tragic or sudden death. The care given, the space created, and the ability to weep with those who weep shine forth in these moments. Saying “thank you” to the funeral dinner crew or the visitation teams during worship can be a sign that God is at work among you. This is the house of “latter splendor” that Haggai talks about in our text for the week. Celebrate who you are and who you are becoming at the same time.

There is also space for confession for the times the church doesn't rise to the occasion. Honest confession for sins of commission and omission can be a cleansing start to a new embrace of the vision. When we draw attention to how the church has been complicit in the brokenness of our world and the marginalization of the stranger and sojourner in our midst, we take the first step toward changing this behavior. This is not church bashing, but an honest assessment of history and practice that enables us to claim the gift of the promise still before us. It is a way of inviting the one we worship to come and walk alongside us as we seek to be the presence of Christ in the world and not just in worship.

PREACHING NOTES

What good is nostalgia? Not so fast. Think about it for a moment. We can be quick to toss aside what came before. Surely there is value in looking back. There is some comfort in remembering what used to be. True, we can get caught up in it, living in the past and losing track of the present, let alone the future. Nostalgia, like most things, can become an idol. But healthy attention to the past can help us understand the legacy in which we stand, and we can face the future unafraid. At least, that is the hope.

That thought exercise was so that we can ask, “Was Haggai a proponent of nostalgia in our text for this week? Is Haggai looking back to what used to be when he wonders if anyone remembers the former glory of the temple, now standing in ruin before them?” Some scholars wonder if the prophet himself remembers and is inviting others to join him in the reminiscence. It’s hard to say, and there is little that we know about Haggai himself. However, there is something about the power of the past that Haggai hopes to use to envision the future and encourage the present.

“Yet now take courage,” Haggai declares to the governor as he sets to work on the building of the temple (Haggai 2:4 NRSV). The task will be difficult and maybe full of tears as the people remember what was lost and the suffering endured in exile. But take courage, the prophet declares, because you are not alone. That’s the overriding message of the text for this week. You are not alone. “I am with you, says the Lord of Hosts” (Haggai 2:4 NRSV).

That information is sorely needed because the task at hand is difficult, and struggles will come. A whole lot of “shaking going on” is on the horizon. The filling of the temple will involve some struggle, though that isn’t explicitly spelled out here. Maybe there is a conflict with those who stole the riches of the temple. Maybe it is the shaking of the populace required in any major capital campaign. It is hard to say. But this isn’t going to be a walk in the park.

Yet, “take courage,” says the prophet. God is in control. God is the architect of the vision and the author of this new story, and the future is brighter than the past. “The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts” (Haggai 2:9 NRSV). Indeed, each rebuilding brought expansion, beauty, and value to the temple. So, Haggai serves as the site manager, holding the plans up for all the workers to see, and each recognizes the wonder of the temple, so they can build with new energy and enthusiasm.

Is that the role of the prophet? Is he really focused on stone and mortar, carving and etching? Or is something deeper going on here? Let’s take another look at the speech to Governor Zerubbabel and the workers on the job site and ask again, “Where does the glory reside?” When Haggai asks if anyone saw the temple before it was destroyed and then asks what they see before them now, he might be declaring that they have lost the vision of the purpose of the temple. When he says, “Is it not in your sight as nothing?” he might be telling them that they are too wrapped up in buildings, in stone and mortar. In the next few verses, Haggai reminds them that God has not forsaken the promise to be present with them, even though the building is in ruins. He doesn’t say, “Once you rebuild, then I can come back and be with you.” No, he repeatedly says, “God is present.” Still present. Fully present. Even when we stand in the rubble of our hopes and dreams, God is present. Even when it seems that the promises of the past are far from us in these troubled times, God is present. Even when the task before us seems greater than our strength and resources allow, God is present.

At the end, when Haggai points to the future, telling his hearers that the latter splendor of this house will be greater than the former, what house is he thinking of? Standing on the job site, with the plans for the temple around them and the ruined structure in need of repair, he is speaking of the temple itself, the house of the Lord. Unless his vision is bigger than the structure. The house where God resides is not just the building they call the *temple*. We might even say it is only the temple when it is filled with the people of God. The house the prophet calls them to see is the nation, the chosen, the people among whom God abides. Haggai says they have lost sight of who they are. They are wrapped up in their building and not in their being and doing.

During the pandemic, many churches and communities of faith lost their way or perhaps their identities because they were unable to gather in person. Some of these communities have never fully recovered from that time and are shells of their former glory. Others saw the opportunity to be reminded that the church is not the building but the people at work in various ways in the community and their own homes, and that God was present with them in that work. The glory was in the doing and the being, not in the structure. The theologian Leonard Sweet, in a podcast, declared that perhaps the pandemic was good for the church in that it might help us get over our “edifice complex.” Maybe Haggai, even as he was helping to direct the rebuilding of the temple after exile, was sounding the same note.

What are we building in the end? Better structures for doing the work of ministry? There are good reasons for creating space for all sorts of activities. As human beings, we need places of beauty and wonder that will draw us into a deeper experience of God and God’s presence in our lives and our world. But Haggai would have us remember that the building will serve its purpose only when the people are creating space for God in their doing and being, in their thinking and dreaming. That is the latter splendor Haggai hopes for, a community of faith that allows space for God’s glory to shine through them and from them. May it be so.

LITURGICAL RESOURCES

Call to Worship

L: Even though we don’t always feel it, God is with us.

P: The darkness and doubt of the world can threaten to consume us.

L: Yet God is with us.

P: All around us, there is fear and hopelessness.

L: God brings to us hope and peace. We place our trust in God’s abundant love.

P: Let us freely and without fear open our hearts to God’s healing words of hope. AMEN.

Nancy C. Townley, “Call to Worship 4,” Worship Connection: November 6, 2022, *Ministry Matters*, <https://www.ministrymatters.com/worship/entry/4369/worship-connection-november-10-2019>.

Prayer

Most Holy and Powerful God, we take courage today that you will provide all we need to keep your presence at the center of our work to rebuild this church and the community around us for your glory. We need you today to shake the heavens and the earth. Shake the trees and the dry land. Shake the

hearts and souls, pockets, wallets, and pocketbooks of all of us here and those around us. Shake us so that our earthly treasures and heavenly investments would be released freely to carry out your purposes. All we have needed, you have provided. Now, may we provide all you need for this temple, our own temples, and this community to be whole. As we bring our gifts to you, instill in our souls the fact that our silver is yours and our gold is yours, no matter how much or how little we have. And unlike prosperity pimps who spend too much time preaching garbage, may we know that as we prosper you, you will prosper us, not for our own selfish gain, but for the sole purpose of positioning us to prosper others in need. For we are blessed to be a blessing! We thank you and we praise you. In the mighty name of Jesus, amen!

*Joseph W. Daniels Jr., **The Africana Worship Book for Year C** (Discipleship Resources, 2008), 182.*

Prayer of Confession

God of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, we barely remember all that has gone before. Our memories of former glory are filtered through so many experiences, through joy and through pain. Our today is blurred by our anxieties and our fears, and we cannot always see what you are doing in our midst. Forgive our shortsightedness. Forgive our focus on a misremembered history. Forgive our reluctance to embrace what you are bringing to life among us.

Your prophet asks us to take courage and know that you are with us, that your spirit abides among us. Remind us that you abide not in buildings but in the people who call on your name. Help us trust in the splendor that will come as we continue to build up the body and to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Derek Weber, April 2025

Benediction: Haggai 2: 4-5

Hear again the promise God made to his people long ago:

Do not be discouraged!
Be strong and courageous.
Keep working,
for I am with you.
My Spirit remains with you
and is living among you.
So do not be afraid!

“Benediction,” re:Worship, <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/10/benediction-haggai-1-4-5.html>.

Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost – *Rejoice Forever in Creation*

November 16, 2025

[Isaiah 65:17-25](#)

Color – Green

WORSHIP PLANNING

There are so many directions the worship team could take the theme for this week. “Rejoice Forever in Creation” elicits a host of natural images and creation-based words and invitations, so this Sunday could be a mini “Earth Day” at the end of the year. Stewardship of our natural resources needs attention more than once a year. It might be worth spending time on these issues. Perhaps your Creation Care Team could be featured in worship today. Perhaps have a bulletin insert with tips on how to rejoice in creation by caring for our carbon footprints or the environment around the church building. The text from Isaiah ends with some beautiful images of creation living in harmony and upending the predator and prey hierarchy so prevalent in our world.

Yet, in the middle of the text, the images are not so much the wilderness or grandeur of the environment, but rather the human habitation that is now claimed as a part of creation. The city of Jerusalem as a joy, houses and vineyards, sustainable farming, or farm-to-table partnerships feature in our text. There is something about health care, infant mortality, and elder care. Through it all, there is a sense of community about the grief we face and the struggles we live through as we care for one another in deep and profound ways.

Rejoicing in creation could include how we care and are cared for. We might give thanks for those in the medical community, honoring those who made a career out of health care. Or we might feature caregivers on many levels, from those tending to aging parents to those raising children or providing childcare in their homes or businesses. If your church has a preschool or childcare facility, name the workers, bring them forward, or send them a note of gratitude. Have the congregation sign a card of thanks to be delivered on Monday when they return to work.

Rejoicing is the key word. There will always be struggles and issues to resolve. There will always be a need for confession and repentance, for reconciliation and forgiveness. This week, we can focus on gratitude and hope. We can lift up the possibilities in both the natural world and the human-created environment of caring and community. Let’s focus on the vision of what could be, or even what is promised, and then do our best to live into that reality as we worship and then as we leave the worship moment to live out this hope in our lives every day. Send folks out with a call to live a life rejoicing in creation.

PREACHING NOTES

I remember when, as a serving pastor, I heard our new bishop preach. It was a called, not required, but “if you knew what was good for you, you’d be there” clergy meeting. So, I went. Called “Clergy Covenant Day,” it was an opportunity to celebrate or at least remember that we belong to one another and to something bigger than ourselves. We live on islands most of the time. My church and I. It is easy to forget that there is a bigger church, a *capital C Church*, that we need to remember we are a part of and beholden to. So, I went to hear words from my bishop, whom I hadn’t met yet.

There were other words, of course, colleagues and friends, students and mentors; we exchanged greetings and inquiries, touched base, and managed to avoid anything of substance. As often happens when we talk to people in certain settings, we find we aren't really talking. We are talking to be heard, to share something deep or significant about ourselves. We talk to fill the silence and use words to keep the distance between ourselves and others, not in an angry or hurtful way, but in a self-protection mode.

"How are things?"

"Great, things are just great."

Even when things aren't great. We could hear that if we listened or chose to listen a little deeper, a little more. If we took the risk of listening, who knows what we might hear? Instead, we go with impressions, trigger words, insider language, determining who is for us and who is against us. Words let us choose sides, not build community. Words become weapons, flaming darts that degrade and call names, instead of the Word that creates and gives life.

No, I'm not talking about a clergy meeting anymore. Perhaps you gathered that. I'm looking a little wider, raising my sights to the landscape in which we find ourselves these days— a war-torn, cratered surface, a blood-strewn landscape of our political discourse, a nation torn by words of hate and fear. But now it's over. Right? Let's breathe a sigh of relief and get back to being ... great.

I did an extended Advent in that year of our clergy meeting. We launched six weeks from Christmas, which allowed us to spend three weeks on the original meaning of the season, the anticipation of the coming kingdom of God. Advent was always about the second coming of Christ. Later, Advent was co-opted by the juggernaut of Christmas, and we began focusing on the first coming. There are, of course, connections between the two, and it should be possible to do both. But invariably, we lose something in the blending. "Why do we pretend it hasn't happened yet?" Someone asked me that a previous Christmas. "Why do we play-act, instead of just celebrating what has already been done?" That's the danger of losing the sense of anticipation, of what is still coming into the world. We think it's all been done. We think the story has ended, and this is what we've got. There are a few problems to sort out, but a little more elbow grease, and we've got it done. Without this ability to look forward to the fulfillment of the promise, we become a works-righteousness community that feels guilty for not getting everything fixed. We gather week after week to be piled on again and again, more and better. Work harder; do more. We come to be lifted up and relieved of our burdens, but we trudge away from our encounter with God with an even heavier heart. It was as if we met our loving Father, and God wasn't pleased, so we've got to work harder to be worthy of the love we are dying to receive. We've given up on looking forward; we've lost our grip on faith. We've become the Pharisees that Jesus complained were adding to the burdens of others and not lifting a finger to help.

Fingers have been lifted lately. This larger sense of Advent was stolen from us, stolen and twisted by people hungry for change. That's what anticipating the kingdom is about: the recognition that the world needs to change, that the sin that leads to brokenness is beyond our power to repair, that the consequences of our hatred, prejudice, and self-centeredness have gotten beyond our ability to correct, that our way of living has excluded too many, has pushed down and set aside, has run over and used up people and resources and relationships and cultures; and we need help. It has gotten so bad that it isn't just the "them" who feel it; we feel it too. We cry out for change, for a savior. The problem is that there are saviors aplenty. And because we are desperate, we listen to them when they promise to make our lives and our world better. Never mind that others have to suffer; others have to take the blame for the

brokenness; enemies - scapegoats have to be found. It can't be our own sin that has gotten us here. We'll follow the one who points out the cause of our pain and drives out the offender, the sinner, from our midst, so we can live in security and comfort.

Except that isn't how the kingdom of God is proclaimed. Instead, anticipating the kingdom is a proclamation that there is only one Savior; there is only one source of security and comfort. When the kingdom comes, those on the margins will be gathered in first. The broken and the grieving, the lost and different, the outcast and shamed will sit at the table with the one who brings the new heaven and the new earth.

And here's the mark, the sign of the proclaimed kingdom: there will be joy in the people of the kingdom. There will be delight, not hate or division, not laughter that demeans and diminishes, but laughter that rejoices in the community that we will become in the kingdom of God in all its surprising diversity. The struggles of the poor, infant mortality, inadequate health care in old age, homelessness and hunger, and more will all disappear in the kingdom. We long for an inclusive kingdom of joy, not a country made great based on fear, scarcity, hatred, and an abusive hierarchy instead of equality rooted in the recognition of our heritage as children of God. We seek a joyful kin-dom of relationship and unity, a joyous expression that is felt in all of creation. The world will no longer suffer from our greed and our fear of scarcity. It will be a source of sustained and sustainable joy for all creatures.

Best of all, did you notice, we will be heard. Our words won't be barriers but an invitation to enter in, to connect, to invest ourselves in one another, because there is one who is invested in us, one who hears the cries of our heart, who knows us, cares for us, and shows us how to care for others.

We have words to use in this world: words that could wound, divide, and separate. Or we could speak in ways that show what we are longing for, a kingdom that has room for us, for all of us.

LITURGICAL RESOURCES

Call to Worship

(inspired by Isaiah 65: 17-25)

Leader: Celebrate and rejoice, all you people of Christ,

Women: For the Lord our God is doing a new thing!

Men: The old order is gone,

All: everything is new!

Leader: Illness, disease and crying and mourning,

Women: shall be as a distant memory!

Men: Hatred and war shall cease from the earth,

All: For Christ has risen! Death is defeated!

Hallelujah! Jesus lives!

Hallelujah! Amen.

From Worship Resource Archive; reposted on re:Worship, <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/04/call-to-worship-everything-is-new.html>.

In the New Jerusalem

(May be read responsively, as a meditation, or unison as a call to worship or prayer)

One day in the New Jerusalem
We shall all walk in peace.
There shall be joy, unspeakable joy.
No longer shall there be weeping or wailing
Nor shall we bury our daughters and sons prematurely
In the New Jerusalem.
We will not labor in vain.
No more shall we plant and not eat of the fruit of our hands
No more shall we build only to have another inhabit our dwelling
No more shall we be oppressed because of class, color, or gender
In the New Jerusalem.
Our enemies will be our friends.
Rise up children of the Most High God,
See what is to come!
Hold this promise in your heart
We shall toil and not see the benefits for a while
But one day, God shall come for us
And bring us to the new city
Where we may rest from our present angst
And find true communion with the Creator and all creation.

Sharletta M. Green, *The Africana Worship Book for Year C* (Discipleship Resources, 2008), 52.

Prayer of Confession (Isaiah 65, Luke 21)

O God, we are more like the vision in Luke
than the vision of Isaiah.
We see wars, hatred, and violence everywhere,
yet despair of ever stopping them.
We see oppression and injustice and persecution,
but fail to raise our voices in prophetic protest.
We have become a pessimistic people.
Help us believe—really believe—
in Isaiah’s vision of the peaceable kin-dom,
in your promise of a new heaven and new earth.
Let your cry be our cry:
“They shall not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain.” Amen.

Words of Assurance (Isaiah 12)

God is our strength and our salvation.

God's anger is turned away,
and in its place, we find comfort,
steadfast love, and forgiveness.
With this hope, we can draw water
from the wells of salvation
with joy and thanksgiving.

Passing the Peace of Christ (Isaiah 65)

Sisters and brothers, we are part of the new heaven and new earth. In God's love, we can reach across the differences that divide us. Greet one another in this spirit of reconciliation and peace.

Joanne Carlson Brown, "Worship Elements: November 13, 2022," *Ministry Matters*,
<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/4387/worship-elements-november-13-2022>.

Benediction (Isaiah 65, Luke 21)

Go forth into a world that needs new visions.
Bring the message of hope and love,
of justice and peace, to all you meet.
Live the dream. Make it reality.
Celebrate endings and new beginnings,
challenges and promises.
Live the new creation. Amen.

Joanne Carlson Brown, "Worship Elements: November 13, 2022," *Ministry Matters*,
<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/4387/worship-elements-november-17-2019>.

Christ the King/Reign of Christ - Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost – *Woe to the Shepherds*

November 23, 2025

[Jeremiah 23:1-6](#)

Color - White

WORSHIP PLANNING

Whether you use the traditional title for this final day of the Christian Year, “Christ the King Sunday,” or the newer designation, “Reign of Christ Sunday,” the emphasis is on allegiance to the Savior, Jesus the Christ. For some, Christ the King refers to the person of Christ and therefore can be used to capture all that he was and said during the earthly ministry, as well as the position of authority he now holds “at the right hand of God the Father.” Others suggest that Reign of Christ emphasizes the relationship with all of creation, with us and with all. It might also be argued that both approaches bring us to the same place. So, whatever broadens the horizons of your congregation and provides enough tradition to be located in this space is up to the worship team in your place.

If there is a Sunday when creeds are appropriate, this is it. Of course, creeds are appropriate at any time, but they are doubly so on this occasion. Again, there is a choice of tradition or a newer expression of faith. The Nicene or Apostles’ Creeds provide, for many, the familiar language of a long heritage in the faith and bring folks back into the heart of belief. The Canadian or Korean Creeds can give a global expression in words that also fit our faith. A Modern Affirmation seeks to capture the essentials of faith in a language that sounds more like we talk today. Perhaps there is an affirmation from a confirmation class that could be used, or a youth expression written on a retreat or mission trip that speaks to your context yet also reaches the heights of our theological understandings.

Joining in a creed or affirmation of faith is an opportunity to claim one’s faith within the body of the gathered community. It is at once an individual and a corporate act. “This is my faith,” we declare, alongside “This is our faith.” Whatever words or formulations we use, we can pledge allegiance to Christ once more and be reminded that this is the highest allegiance, above nation or tribe or race. We belong to Christ, the unifier, the one who gathers us and claims us as precious children of God. There are always competing allegiances, other voices calling us to follow. Some seem to align with the cause of Christ; others do not. It is a time of discernment as we gather for worship each week and on this day. We need to know the Christ we claim today, to know his words and example. We need to test the other claims and abandon those that take us away from the gospel he brings, namely the call to love God and neighbor. This is a day to stake our claim as followers of Christ.

PREACHING NOTES

I watched the snow flurries fill the gray skies. “No significant accumulation” was the confident weather advice. I believed it; the ground was too warm. Maybe there would be a small snow pile on a concrete corner somewhere, but for the most part, the flakes didn’t reach the ground. They were just spinning around in a haphazard, frenetic dance, falling only to rise again, whipped on the cold winds and air currents, still trying to adjust to the roller coaster temperatures over an unusual fall. Then they danced away and left behind the cold gray day.

My thoughts were as scattered as those flakes. My thinking was buffeted by various currents from text to season, from issues local and national, from a need to apologize for misunderstandings - mishearing in my own congregation, to the need to continue to proclaim hope and the longing for a kingdom promised but not yet realized, even while we point out aspects of our world that are the antithesis of that kingdom.

We launched our extended Advent observance the previous week. We were asking, "What are you waiting for?" Isaiah called us to long for a kingdom of hope and joy, diversity, acceptance, and inclusion. I called us to stand against what in our world didn't reflect that kingdom. It was a rallying cry to stand against hate. I must not have done a good job, because many heard an accusation and a divisive message about which side is right and which is wrong. They heard blame and finger-pointing, not an invitation to show love, not hate. Some wanted to applaud; others wanted to tar and feather me. It was a difficult week.

Then I turned to the lectionary for this week and read: "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD" (*Jeremiah 23:1 NRSV*).

Jeremiah was talking about kings, not priests. The prophet was pointing out that the leaders of the people were charged with not being divisive. They were called to build up the nation as a people of God. In those days, among those people, there was no division between faith and state. They were supposed to be one; the king was a spiritual leader, not just a political one. Jeremiah is pointing out the failings of those who sat on the throne of God's people.

There is an interesting textual variant in the second verse of this text. Our version reads that the shepherds "scattered the flock and have driven them away." In a more Jewish translation, the verse reads that the shepherds let them scatter and go astray. They weren't the cause of the scattering. The cause was the willfulness, the sinfulness of the people. But the leaders didn't help them overcome their natural tendency to separate, to follow their own will rather than the will of the one who calls them into community.

Maybe it doesn't matter that much. Maybe the fault isn't what is important. Maybe it is simply the result, the effect. In the end, it doesn't matter that for Jeremiah, the shepherds he calls out are kings. It doesn't matter because we see the word *shepherd*, and we don't think of political leaders. We think of people like me. I can't help but feel the weight of that accusation. It doesn't matter that I wasn't trying to scatter the flock. It doesn't matter that I wasn't driving them away, pointing fingers, or condemning anyone's choice or side. Neither does it matter that I was trying to galvanize the body of Christ into standing against an evil arising in our nation, and that attending to the words I spoke would reveal that intent. It doesn't matter because the flock was scattered. I felt that weight on my soul.

Maybe I'm not worthy of the position I had been given, regardless of my intent. No, not maybe. I'm not, not in the least. Luckily for me, however, I stand on this side of Easter, on this side of the Incarnation. The one who gathers is not me. It is only in Christ that we find our unity.

In most churches this weekend, we will be celebrating, acknowledging, commemorating, and observing Christ the King Sunday. This holy day reminds us that our unity is not in denomination or local community, not in preachers we like or don't like, not in political affiliation or family relationships. Our unity is in Christ. The question then becomes, "Who are you waiting for?"

Jeremiah says the days are coming when “The Lord is Our Righteousness” will reign over us, when judgments will be executed from on high, when faithfulness to relationships will overcome opinions and preferences, when the Anointed One will deal fairly with all God’s people.

Who are you following? Who are you believing in? Who is the bearer of your hope? Who speaks into your hunger and your fears? Who defines what a life of meaning and fullness means? For whom are you waiting? And do you wait with joy? What we learn this Christ the King Sunday is that allegiance to this king invites us to consider how we wait and not just that we wait. Since waiting is living, or living is waiting, the real question for us this day is, “How shall we live day by day?”

LITURGICAL RESOURCES

Opening Prayer

Come once again,
and feed your flock like a shepherd.

Come once again,
and gather up the children, the oppressed,
the sick, the lonely, the humble,
and the rejected of the earth.

Turn our hearts to the least of your children,
for if we lose them,
we become lost.

Reconcile us to you
and to those we have hurt.

On this Christ the King Sunday,
join us together with neighbors, with strangers,
and especially with our own household.

Bring us to your light
in our time of darkness,
through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Adapted from First Sunday of Advent Prayers and Litanies, posted on the Ministry Matters website, www.ministrymatters.com/; reposted on re:Worship, <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/10/advent-prayer-come-once-again.html>

Prayer for National Leaders

Lord, we believe you when you say you will lead us. But we have suffered at the hands of those who would destroy and scatter your sheep. You promised that you would raise up shepherds who will gather us together so that no one will have to live in fear. So, we look for those shepherds, Lord.

We pray for those who will do good and do right, for those who will protect the children, who will school the children, who will give the children hope.

We pray for those shepherds who will pursue peace, who will walk humbly, who will reconcile nations.

We pray for shepherds who will fight injustice, who stand on the side of justice.

We pray for shepherds who will feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and set at liberty the captives.

We pray for shepherds who will spread love, show mercy, and practice hospitality.

Lord, we pray for our shepherds, we pray for our people, we pray for our country, we pray for the nations. Amen.

Tony Peterson, *The Africana Worship Book for Year C* (Discipleship Resources, 2008), 164.

Prayer of Confession (Jeremiah 23, Colossians 1)

Imagining your reign
can be difficult, eternal God.
It is difficult to picture a world
governed by your justice
and righteousness alone.
Our minds are held captive
by the worst images
of human kings, rulers, and powers.
When nobler visions fail
and we settle for kingdoms
of our own making,
correct and forgive us.
Free the borders of our imaginations,
that we may envision your greater good
and celebrate the coming of your reign
on earth as in heaven. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon (Luke 1)

Hear the prophecy of Zechariah:
Tender mercy and forgiveness
are the ways of God. We are forgiven.
Let the church say,
Amen.

Hans Holznagel, "Worship Elements: November 20, 2022," *Ministry Matters*,
<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/4410/worship-elements-november-20-2022>.

Benediction

Though the days increase in their darkness, the Lord of light and love reigns supreme. May the power of God's love be in your hearts and reflected in your lives now and always. Go in peace, and may God's peace be with you. AMEN.

Nancy C. Townley, "Worship Connection: November 20, 2022," *Ministry Matters*,
<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/4411/worship-connection-november-20-2022>.