

Squamish United Church  
Rev. Karen Millard  
Christ the King Sunday

November 25, 2018

Scripture:  
Matthew 25:31–46  
John 18:33-37

### Nursing Home King

"When I was growing up in eastern North Carolina," the Rev. William Barber says, "I used to love to sit in my grandmama's kitchen and listen to her sing as she made dinner. Whenever she was done cooking, she'd give me a plate to eat. Then she and some of the other sisters from the church would make up some to-go plates and, with their aprons still on, they'd head out the door to visit the sick and shut-in. 'We going to hope somebody,' Grandmama would say."

He loved his grandmama but he was convinced she had really bad grammar. He knew well that hope isn't a verb.

He's right. It isn't a verb until you or I need it to be. It requires hope and faith to work for justice and love. Sometimes its hard because it is impossible for us to know everything their is to know about the future of our lives or the lives of others and so our faith calls us to hope.

We don't do justice and faith and community work to win. We don't have a church so that we can win. We here because with Christ we are in the struggle for love and justice because there isn't enough hope permeating our world and if there is anything our world needs a little more of these days it is hope.

I think Jesus would see hope as a verb. Hope that pulls you up from the depths of despair, shakes you from your pain and points toward life. It's not just an idea, but it's what pushes you out the door to say that this isn't the end. This isn't all there is and there is justice and love to be done.

Justice and love for people all around us, for people like. Mr. Johnson

As soon as the sun comes up, the woman with the raven hair comes in.

Her voice is so loud - yet he can hardly hear her.

Through the haze of sleep he can see her hair,  
the color of a raven,  
spilling out of her barrette.

She's wearing a green uniform.

"Upsy-daisy," she says,

"It's time to get up, Mr. Johnson."

Mr. Johnson wonders if he is having a visitor.

“Here are your glasses, Mr. Johnson.  
Here are your hearing aids.  
Can you hear me, Mr. Johnson?  
Open your mouth, Mr. Johnson,  
let’s put in your teeth.  
You don’t want to forget your teeth.”  
All this getting ready, he must be having a visitor.  
“Time to get up, Mr. Johnson.  
Time to go the bathroom.  
Give me your hands, Mr. Johnson.”  
★With one big tug, he’s off the bed and standing on the cold floor.  
“Here’s your wheelchair, Mr. Johnson. Sit down in your chair...”  
He wonders where they’re going.  
“We’re going to the bathroom, Mr. Johnson.”  
Slowly they walk to the bathroom.  
The woman with the hair the color of a raven helps him to sit down on the toilet.  
As she waits, she looks quickly into the mirror,  
Tucks her hair behind her ear.  
Mr. Johnson wonders why she’s there,  
Why he’s sitting on the toilet in front of this woman he hardly even knows.  
“Ed’s coming in a minute, Mr. Johnson.  
He’s going to come and give you a shower.  
He’s going to make it nice and hot; he’s going to use that soap you like.”  
All this getting ready, thinks Mr. Johnson, I must be having a visitor.  
He wonders who it might be.  
His wife, his brother, his best friend Arthur, they were in the war together...  
They both went to Japan,  
Then they came back, found wives, bought houses,  
and then settled into a life of hard work and pot roast.  
Maybe Arthur was coming.  
Maybe his son was coming.  
He looked up at the woman with the hair the color of a raven and asked her,  
“Am I having a visitor?”  
She answered him briskly:  
“No, Mr. Johnson, no visitors today.”  
What about my wife, he asked.  
“Your wife passed away six years ago, Mr. Johnson.”  
What about my son?  
“We don’t know where your son is, Mr. Johnson.  
Remember when he came by to tell you he was moving?  
That was three years ago, and we haven’t heard from him since.”  
Mr. Johnson looked perplexed.  
The woman with the hair the color of a raven did not.

After he finished his business on the toilet,  
After he finished being washed in the shower,  
After he finished his breakfast,  
Then someone rolled him and twenty others over to the Common Room,  
There just to the right of the nursing station,  
There right in front of the TV.  
And that's where he stayed.  
Alone, abandoned really, no friends, no family...

★Christ the King Sunday.

You know, When Jesus was alive, he flatly refused the role of king.  
"Blessed are the poor," he said.  
"It's easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle  
than it is for a rich man to get into heaven.  
You need to humble yourself, he said.  
For the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Jesus would never wear a royal robe.  
If someone asked for his coat, he'd give it to them, and his shirt too.  
Christ the King!  
Jesus would never wear golden crown.  
Instead he wore a crown of thorns.  
Christ the King!  
Jesus would never have servants attending him.  
Instead there were criminals, one to his left and one to his right.  
No one else was there.  
Everyone had left him.  
He was all alone, abandoned really,  
Left to die by himself.  
So I wonder...  
Instead of celebrating Christ the King Sunday,  
Perhaps we should celebrate Christ the Nursing Home Patient Sunday?  
Because the Jesus I know would be much more comfortable  
sitting in a wheelchair than he would be on some cosmic royal throne.

The Apostle Paul says, writing to his new churches:

"I never cease to give thanks for you  
as I remember you in my prayers.  
I pray that you will continue to grow in wisdom and in faith.  
I pray that you will know that you are called to hope.  
I know you look around the world, and you get discouraged.  
I know you look around and see war, and hear rumors of war.  
I know you see the violence, and all the loss.  
The rich getting richer, the poor getting poorer.

I know you look around and see all kinds of people getting left behind,  
All kinds of people being abandoned...  
But have faith! Have Hope  
For the one who was abandoned,  
The one who was rejected,  
The one who was left alone to die,  
God raised from the dead,  
God seated at her right hand side.

Here's the good news, Paul says:  
Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!  
The last will be first and the first will be last!  
And here's the thing:  
The one who was rejected,  
the one who was despised  
the one who was left to die alone,  
that one will rule with love and compassion and mercy,  
and that one will be constantly on the lookout for the least of these!

I always struggle with celebrating Christ the King Sunday, but you know what?  
Every time we celebrate it,  
Everytime we confess that Christ is King,  
This is what happens:  
People get hoped  
The sun comes up again.  
And as soon as the sun comes up, the woman with the raven hair comes in.  
She's wearing a green uniform.  
"Upsy-daisy," she says.  
"It's time to get up Mr. Johnson.  
Here are your glasses, Mr. Johnson.  
Here are your hearing aids.  
Can you hear me Mr. Johnson?  
Open your mouth, Mr. Johnson.  
Let's put in your teeth, you don't want to forget your teeth.

And then she says  
Here's your crown, Mr. Johnson, it's all polished and ready to go.  
Let me get your robes.  
Do you want the silver one, the purple one, or the red velvet one?  
Red it is.  
Now let me take your hands.  
Upsy-daisy!  
I'm going to sit you down in your wheelchair.

Now take your scepter.

After we're finished getting you dressed,

Ed is going to wash your feet,

And then we're going to eat.

And after we eat, Mr. Johnson, we're going to wheel you right over there -

not to the right of the nursing station this time,

but to the right of God herself!

I guess it's true what they say, Mr. Johnson:

The last will be first and the first will be last...

Thanks be to God!"<sup>1</sup>

Now Head out the door and go hope on somebody.

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<sup>1</sup> sermon adapted from Elizabeth Myer Boulton <http://www.saltproject.org/progressive-christian-blog/christ-the-king-sermon>