

**Welcome to
Crestholme Presbyterian Church
25th Sunday of Pentecost
November 14, 2021**

At the *, please stand, if you are able.
Large Print Hymnals, Bibles, and Hearing Assist Devices are available upon request.

Gather for Worship

PRELUDE **"Peace In Our Time, O Lord"** **Stearing/Sowerby**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SghKM6X7zM>

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE BELLS

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP **"Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying"** **Choir**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yh9ivThjOz4>

RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: The God of Wisdom calls us to worship;

People: in humility, we gather to offer our thanks and praise.

Leader: The God of Peace calls us to let go of our cares and worries;

People: in faith, we turn to God for hope and guidance.

Leader: The God of Past, Present and Future welcomes us into this moment.

People: in joy, we celebrate life in God's presence!

Leader: Let us worship God together.

People: Hallelujah! Let us praise the Lord!

OPENING PRAYER

New every morning is your love, great God of light, and all day long you are working for good in the world. Stir up in us the desire to serve you, to live peacefully with our neighbors and all your creation and to devote each day to your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

*** OPENING HYMN** **"Love Devine All Loves Excelling"** **Red Hymnal #648**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-6PMvgJHG0>

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Now in humility and trust, we pray for the forgiveness of our sins:

God of grace, for our failure to listen to others, forgive us.

For our blindness to the hurt and suffering of others, forgive us.

For offering judgment rather than compassion, to those in need, forgive us.

For our fear of those who are different from ourselves, forgive us.

For the harm we have done, forgive us.

For the good we have failed to do, forgive us.

Guide us in your truth, and teach us the way to go, that we may love and serve you well, in the Name of the One who saves us, Jesus Christ. Amen

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; our God is merciful. He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. In Christ we are forgiven!

* **GLORIA PATRI**

Blue Hymnal #579

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUBxpypSblw>

* **SHARE THE PEACE OF CHRIST (From your seats, please)**

Leader: Peace be with you!

All: And also with you!

Leader: As God's forgiven people, share the peace of Christ with each other.

CHILDREN'S TIME

Hope in Jesus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zh9QaH-qJkM>

Hear the word of God

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Wise and patient God, In the midst of distractions, help us focus on your presence with us. In the midst of confusing voices, make your Word plain. In the midst of competing desires, show us the path to follow for the sake of Jesus, our friend, teacher and guide, **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Daniel 12:1-3

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%2012%3A1-3&version=NIV>

PSALTER READING

Psalms 16

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+16&version=NIV>

CHORAL ANTHEM

"Come and Find the Quiet Center"

Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=to-6eiVwnIg>

NEW TESTAMENT READING

Hebrews 10: 11-14 (15-18) 19-25

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+10%3A+11-14%2C15-18%2C+19-25&version=NIV>

GOSPEL READING

Mark 13: 1-8

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+13%3A+1-8&version=NIV>

SERMON

"Hoping Skills"

Fred Archer

Written by The Rev Dr. Amy Richter

If ever there were a Sunday for today's opening collect, this is it. What a gospel lesson. *Hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest* this gospel? It's full of troubling images, images that cut too close to home, that sound too much like the atrocities we see in the news.

But our collect reminds us that all holy Scripture was written for our learning and to lead us to the blessed hope of everlasting life. This morning, then, we are encouraged to hear how this gospel offers us hope. When we do, we will develop some very important skills, not just to cope, but, more importantly, to *hope*.

Hoping skills are important because the situations Jesus describes to his disciples are ongoing. Those who first heard Mark's story of Jesus would have nodded just as we do: people claiming authority they don't have—yes, oh, we've seen it; wars—too many, Lord; famines, environmental disaster—will there ever be an end? People have tried to pin down texts like this to one date, one time in history or yet to come, as if Jesus were describing one particular false Messiah, war, disaster. But Jesus isn't being specific, and, at the same time, he is.

Specific: a time did come when the temple was torn down. Not specific: generation upon generation has experienced hardship. Most important specific: The God who was God then, the God who could be relied upon amidst chaos and loss, is still God now, here in the time of our wars, our environmental disasters, our famines, our false messiahs, our pandemic; and will be God in the future, and into the beyond-all-time time when, as we would read beyond today's reading in Mark 13, "heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Mark 13:31).

Our gospel lesson appointed for this Sunday is apocalyptic writing. The word *apocalypse* means an unveiling or uncovering of what was previously unknown or hidden. Apocalyptic literature abounds with bizarre visions and strange symbolism. Apocalyptic writing emerges especially when people are in desperate situations, in times of persecution, when their faith is under attack or in danger of being abandoned for the sake of safety. Because it's written in times of persecution, apocalyptic writing often uses symbolic speech that makes it seem a sealed book to those outside the situation.

What is always clear, though, is that apocalyptic writing, including chapter 13 of Mark's Gospel, which we hear just the beginning of today, is written to give hope to its readers. It's written to keep our eyes focused on God and God's actions in history and to give assurance that, despite appearances to the contrary, God is still God. God still reigns. The future belongs to God.

The central theme of apocalyptic literature is God's revelation concerning the coming of the kingdom of God, the fullness of the reign of God. From the very beginning, the faith of Israel, our spiritual forebears, was oriented toward the future. God's work in history is purposeful, and events are pressing toward the realization of the divine goal for all of God's creation. History is not spinning in circles or repeating itself like the cycle of the seasons. Nor is it governed by blind fate or chance. Israel perceived that its history was part of a great divine drama, which, under the direction of God, is moving toward a final consummation.

In today's Gospel lesson, we hear just the beginning of Jesus' description of the events that precipitate the inauguration of the kingdom of God in its fullness, which actually takes up all of Mark's 13th chapter. In it, Jesus is reminding his disciples that our times—our past, our present, our future—are in God's hands. Not that God controls every action, as if there is no such thing

as human choice or agency, but that God will work God's purposes out within human history, within time and space, on this earth, until God brings about the new heavens and a new earth.

The disciples ask Jesus when this will happen, and Jesus answers them by not answering them. Instead, he tells them to be faithful, not fearful, to set their minds on trusting and being aware, rather than worrying about a calendar. Jesus' words are meant to put an end to any speculation about when the end of time as we know it will happen. Jesus says, don't worry about knowing when. That's not yours to know. But there are things you can know.

The things we can know are *hoping skills*.

The first of these hoping skills is to keep the Big Picture Perspective—the really big picture perspective, the God's eye view of human history.

We are talking about something we know only in part, and all our words for God and comprehensions of God fall far short of the divine reality. Nonetheless, all scripture was written to give us hope, to give us a picture, to give us the divine promise and perspective in ways that even we humans can understand. Here's the big picture: God is at work, bringing everything to completion according to God's purposes. God does not willingly cause the suffering of any of God's creatures, and it grieves the God who made us with the capacity for grief when anyone suffers, when anyone causes suffering. But even the worst of what we experience is redeemable. All is subject, in time, to God's purposes and plans. God is at work now, reaching out to us with a future that is whole and holy and blessed, even when in the present small picture, we can't see it. One hoping skill is to focus on the really big picture.

Another hoping skill is to get to know Scripture.

It's related to keeping the big picture in view, because Scripture is our source, along with tradition and reason, for knowing who God is, what promises God has made, how God works, what faithfulness looks like, especially as we know God in Jesus Christ. When Jesus is urging his disciples not to be led astray by false Messiahs, he is reminding them to cling to what they know about him. We will not be deceived and we will have reason for hope if we know the scriptures, if we use them as the lens through which to view the world and how we make our way in the world.

This is not a call for proof-texting, using one piece or passage of scripture to justify our own actions or decisions. It is instead the much more challenging task of examining our whole lives in light of the whole body of Scripture. Not of knowing just a few beloved verses, but knowing the whole story, its shapes and themes and concerns. When we know how the story ends, with victory over death, and that the way to victory was through self-giving love that was willing to suffer and die, we have reason to hope, now and in the future.

A third hoping skill is this: Expect trouble. But expect Christ more.

Jesus, in Mark 13, as mentioned before, describes a scene that many Jews experienced not long after Jesus' time on earth, when the Romans once again cracked down on their subject peoples. The Romans desecrated and then destroyed the Temple. This passage was saved as

important, not just because it described something that had in fact happened in the early days of Christianity, but because it also describes a reality that has been true ever since. Christians should expect difficulties. Being faithful has its consequences in the world. Being faithful has meant martyrdom and family divisions, execution, persecution, poverty, estrangement, ostracism, sacrifice. Not only is Christianity no magic charm against the harms that befall every human—accidents and sickness and death—faithfulness means being open to more trouble still. Christians expect trouble.

But we expect Christ more. Nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Trouble is real. But Christ is more powerful than any trouble. Jesus wanted his disciples to know, his disciples then, and us, disciples today, that we can be alert, open, and watchful for all the signs of God at work in the world, and for what is *not* of God in the world. Expect trouble, but expect Christ more. Expect that we are not alone in the face of any trouble. When dreams fail and disasters come and we find ourselves against a wall or looking into darkness, we may be at the end of our rope, but God is not at the end of God's. We are not alone. Christ is with us. We are promised the help of the Holy Spirit. And we are given one another, in the words of our reading from Hebrews, to "provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together,"—and now, don't we have even more ways than ever to see one another's faces, to hear one another, even when we can't be in the same room together?—and to encourage one another. Christ is present as we reach out to one another, when we reach out to serve any who are suffering, especially when we reach out in times of trouble.

These are hoping skills for as long as we need them: Remember the really big picture. Get to know scripture. Expect trouble; expect Christ more. Amen.

*** HYMN**

"Wonderful Words of Life"

Red Hymnal #406

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7x3OX6v5_o

Respond in Love and Service

*** AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

Leader: Let us declare our faith in God.

All: We believe that the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and everything in them, who still upholds and rules them by his eternal counsel and providence, is our God and Father because of Christ his Son. We trust him so much that we do not doubt he will provide whatever we need for body and soul, and he will turn to our good whatever adversity he sends us in this sad world. He is able to do this because he is almighty God; he desires to do this because he is a faithful Father. Nothing will separate us from his love. Amen

PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

God's goodness fills the world, if only we have eyes to see it. God's goodness fills the world, if only we have hearts to share what God has given us. Know that your gifts come from God's goodness and pass that goodness along to others in Jesus' name.

Please, continue to support the life and work of Crestholme. You can mail your tithes, pledges, and offerings to...

CPC

PO Box 23919

SA TX 78223-0901

Or you can save them and gather them until we meet again. Thank you!

Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice.

*** DOXOLOGY**

Blue Hymnal #592

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uyg6-htOtHU>

*** PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Father God, we watch the news and believe that you were speaking to our time when you spoke privately to the disciples on the Mount of Olives. You caution us not to be lead astray. We are trying, Lord, to keep our eyes fixed on you. We have worshipped you in song and prayer. We have listened for your Word. Now, we humbly place before you these offerings and tithes. May our resolve be strong to do your will and follow your path. For the sake of Jesus, we pray. Amen. **Amen.**

*** HYMN FOR OUR NATION**

"Heal Our Land"

Red Hymnal #800

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTm_rA54EGw

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us intercede before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the sake of the Church, the world, and one another.

A brief silence

Father, we don't want to hear about persecution, judgment, and destruction! Kindle our hearts, fortify our minds, strengthen our spirits, steel our sinews. Unite us to Jesus, so that we stand strong even in the most difficult trials. For in even those worst times, we're called to love you – with all our heart, mind, spirit, and strength. And we're commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves. Give us your Spirit, so we desire and can do your holy will.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Bless your Church. You have promised that, though temples made by human hands may be destroyed, your Temple of living stones shall abide forever. Purify, preserve, and provide for it through your Holy Spirit. Unite it always to your Son, its Cornerstone and Head; and make it a house of prayer for all nations.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You foretold times of persecution for those who proclaim you as Lord and follow you as Savior. Shield, strengthen and bless all who endure such fiery trials. Help us to remember them in prayer, to stand with them in witness, and to provide tangible help for their physical needs.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Perfect the faith of this congregation, so that we are bold to approach the throne of grace with our prayers and supplications. Conform us to your mind and your likeness. Use us to bring your forgiveness, life, and salvation to those who are estranged from you.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Give us the wisdom to identify, encourage, and mentor future pastors and theologians. The world is dying for lack of the knowledge of your Lordship. You know the hearts of your people. Touch and kindle them with a passion to proclaim your Son, crucified and risen from the dead to bestow forgiveness unto eternal life, to the people who need your strong Word the most.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Bless and guide all the peoples of this world. Let them put their trust not in any earthly ruler but in your wise governance and gracious commands. Teach us how to live at peace with one another; to care for the poor and vulnerable in our midst; and to work for the common good, in accordance with your will.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You are King of the nations and the Prince of Peace; and yet in these troubled times, good men and women must stand in harm's way to defend life and liberty. Guide and strengthen them. Let their labors be a blessing to many. Help us to honor all who have served, especially those who have sacrificed the most on our behalf.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Your dear Son is the Resurrection and the Life. Grant healing to all who suffer, and give them a foretaste of his victory over death. Especially we pray for: {List}. Bless all caretakers with skill, patience, and compassion. Re-establish bonds of affection and fellowship that have been unraveled by sickness or sorrow.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Holy God, we acclaim you as Lord of Life. Thank you for bestowing your eternal life upon all who died trusting in you. We ask you to guard and guide us safely through this earthly life, with all its troubles, trials, and temptations. Fill us with confidence that we can always turn to you with all our needs and cares. Raise us up on the last day, with all whom you have redeemed. Let us join the chorus of adoration and praise to you: for with your Son and the Holy Spirit, you are our joy, our delight, and our eternal inheritance.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For Jesus' sake, dear Father, graciously hear and generously answer our fervent petitions, to your glory and for the benefit of for whom we pray

Join me now as we together pray the prayer Jesus taught his disciples:

**Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive those our debtors,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.**

*** CLOSING HYMN**

"Blessed Assurance"

Red Hymnal #572

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuyf1YQvcwY>

*** BENEDICTION**

Life is short and we do not have too much time
to gladden the hearts of those who walk with us.
So be ready to love and unhesitating in kindness.

And may the blessing of the deep mystery we name God –
Source of life, love and hope,
Word of life,
and ever-present Spirit of grace
be with you this day and all your days. **Amen**

. The End of Today's Worship Service – The Beginning of Service

Announcements

Welcome to worship with us this morning! We're glad that you're here! If you do not have a church home, we invite you to become a part of our compassionate church family... ask Carlos, Larry or an Elder about meaningful participation and membership!

Next Sunday CP Larry Sears will lead the service.

