

Menifee United Church of Christ

Established in 1962 by God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit

SERMON FOR

November 22, 2015

“Jesus Comes Again Continuously”



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Menifee United Church of Christ

Sunday Service and Sunday School 10 AM

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Live Life Fully Alive!

Psalm 132:9-16

Let your priests be clothed with righteousness, and let your faithful shout for joy. For your servant David's sake do not turn away the face of your anointed one. The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: 'One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne. If your sons keep my covenant and my decrees that I shall teach them, their sons also, for evermore, shall sit on your throne.' For the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation: 'This is my resting-place for ever; here I will reside, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless its provisions; I will satisfy its poor with bread. Its priests I will clothe with salvation, and its faithful will shout for joy.

Revelation 1:4-8

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen. 'I am the Alpha and the Omega', says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Jesus Comes Again Continuously

Many Christians take the Second Coming of Christ very seriously. So a Christian minister certainly wouldn't want to joke about it. Well, maybe just this once.

The Pope gathered a meeting at the Vatican of all the cardinals. The Pope said, "I have some good news and I have some bad news." One of the cardinals said, "Tell us the good news first." The Pope said, "I just got a call from Jesus and he told me that he has come again to the earth!" All the cardinals cheered! Then one of the cardinals said, "Well, what's the bad news?" The Pope said, "He was calling from Salt Lake City."

In seminary one day, we had a big test in our Greek class. I dreaded that test. So I walked into class, sat down, looked out the big window in the front of class that displayed some beautiful trees and a clear blue sky, lifted my arms, and said, "Come Lord Jesus!" (No such luck, of course. I still had to take the test.)

While most Christians believe that Jesus will come again, Jews believe that the Messiah will come only once. And, of course, Jews do not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. Although they do set a place at the Passover meal for the prophet Elijah to come again. Buddhists don't believe the Buddha will come again, because once he achieved enlightenment, upon his death he reached Nirvana. Muslims do not believe Muhammad will come again, but they do believe that Jesus, who Muslims see as a great prophet, will return to the earth.

If Jesus comes again, nobody knows when or where that will be. Will Jesus come again soon in Rome? Will Jesus come again soon in Salt Lake City? Or will Jesus come again soon in Menifee, California? God only knows.

The Bible says, repeatedly, that Christ will come again.

In Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John we read a variation on the same theme. All the Gospels basically say that Jesus will come again to the earth, "with his angels in the glory of [God]," and, "with the clouds of heaven."

The Book of Revelation says, “Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him.” And the Psalmist says that, “The Lord swore to David,” what Christians believe: that Jesus, the son of David, and the Son of God, will sit on the throne in heaven. And will sit on the throne in heaven forever and ever. Or presumably until he comes again.

When Jesus comes again, as I said last week, I don’t believe that he will kill all his enemies for a thousand years, as it says in the Bible. That’s because the Bible also tells us that Jesus said to love our enemies. So why would Jesus kill his enemies if he wants us to love our enemies? And why would Jesus kill his enemies if he loves his enemies? I mean, I’ve heard of tough love, but that seems a little extreme.

So, search the sky if you want to for Jesus to come again. That’s what traditional Christian teachings would have us do. But not all Christians are traditional.

Creeds and theologians offer differing views on the Second Coming of Christ.

The Apostles Creed leaves no doubt that Christ will come again. The Apostles Creed says that Jesus, “...ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.” I remember reciting that as a kid in the little Disciples of Christ church my Grandma took me to back in Michigan.

N.T. Wright is an orthodox theologian in the Church of England. N.T. Wright believes in the Second Coming of Christ. N.T. Wright says, “Jesus is coming back. And it is at his name that every knee will bow.” N.T. Wright adds that Jesus will return to earth as Savior, Lord, and King.

The Jesus Seminar was a group of progressive theological scholars who tried to determine what Jesus really said and what Jesus really did. The Jesus Seminar included theologians like the late Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan, who believe much in the Bible, including predictions of the Second Coming of Christ, should be taken metaphorically, and not literally.

What about you? What do you believe about the Second Coming of Christ? This is a United Church of Christ church, so you don't have to parrot what creeds say or what theologians say about the return of Jesus to the earth. You can think for yourself. And I'm a United Church of Christ minister. So I can think for myself, too. And I think the idea of the Second Coming of Christ is too limiting.

Jesus has come back to earth over and over and over again. We just have to have eyes to see him, ears to hear him, and a spirit to understand him.

When parents love their children unconditionally, no matter what - whether they're the star quarterback or they sit on the bench, whether they're the head cheerleader or they didn't make the squad, whether they're a straight-A student or they barely pass the class - when parents love their children unconditionally, no matter what: Jesus has come again.

When a husband stops abusing his wife, when a bully stops abusing his classmate, and when an addict stops abusing drugs: Jesus has come again.

When people notice life all around them, which they didn't before; when people notice a snow-covered mountain, when people notice the bright eyes of a child, and when people notice

the needs of those who are hurting, and help them: Jesus has come again.

When white police officers do not shoot and kill unarmed blacks: Jesus has come again.

When the USA thinks of the Statue of Liberty, a gift we got from France, and remembers the words near the Statue, “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,” and then welcomes Syrian refugees with open arms: Jesus has come again.

It would be almost sinful for Jesus to wait thousands of years to come again, given all the needs people have on this earth today, and given all the needs that people have had on this earth for the past 2,000 years. Even if Jesus spent all that time sitting at the right hand of God in heaven, Jesus is needed here on earth, more than he is in heaven. So I have to believe that Jesus has come again and again and again for millennia.

You might say, “Now wait a minute, Pastor, I know people who do the right thing and they’re not Christians. They’re Jews or Hindus, Buddhists or Muslims, atheists or agnostics. What do you say about them?” I say, “Bless them.”

I like learning things when I write a sermon and passing them on to you. And I learned several things with this sermon.

Today’s sermon title taught me the difference between continually and continuously. Last Sunday, as I looked at the scripture passages for today, I entitled this sermon, “Jesus Comes Again Continually.” Then on Monday I woke up wondering if it should be continually or continuously. I looked up continually and continuously in the dictionary. Continually means intermittently, while continuously means constantly. And that’s

what I mean, that Jesus comes all the time. Thus today's sermon is entitled, "Jesus Comes Again Continuously."

And today's sermon taught me we can sing seasonal hymns even if it's not the right season for them. So I had us sing, before the sermon, an Easter hymn - "Christ The Lord Is Risen Today" - which we shouldn't sing for several months. And I have us singing, after the sermon, a Christmas carol - "Joy To The World" (the Lord is come) - which we shouldn't sing for several weeks. But there's a method to my madness.

I wanted us to sing those songs today because, for Christians, every day is Christmas and every day is Easter. We don't need to wait until December 25th for Jesus to be born. Hopefully, Jesus is born in our hearts and in other people's hearts every day. Continuously. And we don't need to wait until Easter for Jesus to be resurrected. Hopefully, Jesus is resurrected in our hearts and in other people's hearts every day. Continuously. And we certainly don't need to wait for some future time for Jesus to come again. Jesus comes again continuously whenever people act with compassion, justice, and love.

Let us pray...

*God of Love,
Help us to see Jesus in everyone.
Help us to see Jesus everywhere.
And help us to be Jesus to everyone, everywhere.
Now and forevermore.
By the power of the Holy Spirit.
And in the name of Jesus.
Amen.*

THE GOLDEN RULE

*Do to others what you would
have them do to you.*

Christianity

*What is hateful to you
do not do to others.*

Judaism

*None of you believes until he wishes for his
brother what he wishes for himself.*

Islam

*Do not do to others
what would cause pain if done to you.*

Hinduism

*Hurt not others in ways that you yourself
would find hurtful.*

Buddism

*Regard your neighbor's gain as your gain,
and your neighbor's loss as your loss.*

Taoism

*Do not do to others
what you do not want them to do to you.*

Confucianism

*Treat other people
as you'd want to be treated in their situation.*

Humanism