

**Sermon Outline**  
**Sunday, March 7, 2021**  
**Rev. Britt L. Aerhart**  
**Salisbury United Church, Sherwood Park, Alberta**

“Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.”

Whenever I have taken part in a way of the cross – that is the walk on Good Friday through the inner city with prayer stations at significant points of human trouble and human authority like the Remand Centre, Canada Place, Inner City Pastoral Ministry, Mustard Seed and so forth – a song has been sung.

“Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.”

It was written by a Catholic Priest in the 1960’s who spent time working in the inner city of Chicago. The song went on to be associated for a time with Mother Theresa and her work in the ghettos of Calcutta. The song sings the scripture reading we heard read by the voice of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Like most music, it seals into our hearts and minds the profound spiritual insight that whatever we do to others we are doing to Christ. That Christ comes to us, not on clouds of glory, but in the eyes of those who look back at us each day, and here I would include even our own eyes looking back at us in the mirror. For if we are to believe the teaching, Christ is in each of us, our own selves included.

“Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.”

How is it possible that Christ is within people? Within the breathing broken humanity around us? Within all of the breathing broken creation itself perhaps?

This is where we as Christians need some clarity about what we mean when we talk about Christ. We often use Christ interchangeably with Jesus. Jesus is the given name of the human one we Christians look to as the cornerstone of our faith. The name Jesus means “One who saves”. In the ages of history there have been many people whose lives have been dedicated to saving others. From well know figures like Mother Theresa, who I have already named, to countless unknown and unnamed people who put their lives on the line for others. “One who saves” is a heroic name and a distinguished name, although it is hardly unique in the annals of human history.

Christ on the other hand is unique. It means “anointed one” or “holy one”. Christ means to be uniquely set apart to be *for* an eternal sacred purpose in the world

**Sermon Outline**  
**Sunday, March 7, 2021**  
**Rev. Britt L. Aerhart**  
**Salisbury United Church, Sherwood Park, Alberta**

known only to God. Christ is much bigger and more infinite than Jesus alone. It points to the thing about Jesus that made him bigger than just one human life ... to something so huge that it is our connection to God and to all of life everywhere at once.

One way of describing what the Christ is in relationship to Jesus, is to use the comparison of a kite and a kite flyer.<sup>1</sup> If you have ever flown a kite you know how it works. You unfurl the string from the bobbin, and play it out a good length. If you are lucky someone is holding the kite vertically on the far end of the line. And then you start to run holding on to the line and letting the kite fly up into the sky for everyone to see it. The kite is attached to you but you remain on the ground, holding the string. In this analogy Jesus, the one who saves, is the kite flyer and Christ is tethered to Jesus while at the same time being like the a banner flying high in the wind. Another analogy from the Aspen Parklands we are located in might be an aspen grove. You might see an aspen tree out on a ridge or a downslope, but under the ground is a whole connected network of roots and suckers that lead directly back to the main stand of aspen trees some distance away. The roots are there even if you only see the one tree. Or if that doesn't work think of an iceberg. What you see poking above the water, Jesus, is only part of the whole that makes up the iceberg. There is far more below the waterline than you will ever see and the whole thing, above the water and below the water is the iceberg.

“Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.”

St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, is said to have written a prayer which includes the following words:

“Christ with me,  
Christ before me,  
Christ behind me,  
Christ in me,  
Christ beneath me,

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Rohr, <https://cac.org/another-name-for-every-thing-the-universal-christ/>

**Sermon Outline**  
**Sunday, March 7, 2021**  
**Rev. Britt L. Aerhart**  
**Salisbury United Church, Sherwood Park, Alberta**

Christ above me,  
Christ on my right,  
Christ on my left,  
Christ when I lie down,  
Christ when I sit down,  
Christ when I arise,

Christ in the heart of every one who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.”

That is quite a daring prayer, because it acknowledges that Christ is with and in all things, yet it also prays that we come to perceive that we Christ is with us, especially in the people who hear us and the ones who see us on a daily basis. This follows the scriptures which tells us that Christ’s presence encompasses us no matter where we turn or who we meet, but that Christ’s presence is particularly available in the poor and dejected and rejected in the world. The “least of these” as they are called by Jesus, not because they are least but because that is how the world labels them according to particular standards of what makes one person great and another lesser. Contrary to the worlds labelling of people, it is in and with the least of these that the Christ is especially at home in this life.

“Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.”

When we reach out to each other, particularly when we reach out to those who are thirsty and hungry, who are abused and rejected in the world, we are reaching out to Christ. We are greeting Christ and serving Christ. On the other hand, when we walk by each other, when we refuse to recognize that we have a role to play in meeting the basic needs of our human brothers and sisters and cousins, we are also refusing to recognize the Christ.

This is a sobering thought for us and a hard teaching, because we’ve all done it at some point. I mean, we have all walked on by without stopping to greet the Christ

**Sermon Outline**  
**Sunday, March 7, 2021**  
**Rev. Britt L. Aerhart**  
**Salisbury United Church, Sherwood Park, Alberta**

of our faith. We've walked on by and left someone unfed or uncomfortable, walked on by and let an injustice go unchallenged or a need go unmet. It can happen so easily and so inadvertently. In our global world where the discount clothing we wear can be made in miserable conditions in a sweatshop on the other side of the world or the food we eat can be grown in another place where migrant workers are daily exposed to pesticides, it has become so easy participate in the inadvertent rejection of Christ in others because we never have to see them or meet them. It is that inadvertent turning away from Christ that is a hard teaching for most of us to grasp.

But then Lent is all about sobering thoughts and hard teachings. It leads us to the cross after all, to that place on a hill where Jesus the Christ was edged out of the world onto a cross and put to death because he dared to say 'Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.' That death on the cross is the ultimate human moment of turning away from Christ and toward the powers of this world. It is the ultimate denial of Christ. Of course that is not the real end, and the Christ is revealed by God once again to the world. Christ steps out of the tomb to be fully *in* the world when the stone is rolled away and the graveclothes turn up empty. In the end, it is only then, when the Christ comes to us from the tomb that a transformation takes place in us. We are given the power to recognize Christ in each other and to know that we are truly each others brothers and sisters and cousins. With that realization comes the possibility that we can truly approach this life without prejudice or preconditions toward each other and with openness to the Christ in each of us.

What is it that we have just said when lighting the Christ Candle during Sunday worship. The light of Christ is with us, between us and all around us?

May we meet and recognize and serve the Christ in at least one person each day as we continue on our journey through Lent and through life. Amen.