

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost – 2026

Zechariah 9:9-12

Romans 7:14-25a

Matthew 11:25-30

Our culture lionizes those who appear to be super sophisticates. Are you on board with that? Agree or disagree: God does not use man's tactics. Agree or disagree: Spiritually speaking, man's tactics don't work. Agree or disagree: Man cannot thwart God's plan.

In the book *The Magician's Nephew*, C.S. Lewis describes the creation of Narnia. Narnia is a magical, parallel world governed by a majestic, Christ-like lion named Aslan, and often accessed by human children. Narnia serves as an allegorical battleground of good versus evil, exploring themes of redemption and grace. Aslan imports two very honest, very humble individuals from London to serve as the first king and queen of this newly minted domain – King Frank and Queen Helen. Frank is a cabby, a hardworking, simple man who cares deeply for his horse, Strawberry. Frank is faithful and just and possesses a strong moral character. Working class decency – King Frank is not a worldly-wise individual. He is *not* a super sophisticate. Queen Helen is sweet and kind. She too knows what hard work is and she possesses an honest face. When Aslan summons her to the new world, she is in the middle of a washday with soapsuds on her hands. Though from a humble background, she blossoms physically and emotionally as a queen.

What is Lewis' point? By choosing these two characters to embody the regal positions of the king and queen in a land that reflects the will of the creative Christ figure, what is Lewis' point? Is it possible that the culture around you is promoting values that are inimical to Christ's teaching, Christ's person? If you have a sinful nature, you are vulnerable. Pride, avarice, power and fame – the culture reeks with such infatuations and you are vulnerable. Listen to Jesus' prayer: "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your good pleasure" (Matthew 11:25). Are there elements of Christ's kingdom that are hidden to those who are full of themselves? Jesus says as much. What do you think of that? Is there a wisdom that the church possesses that the world could never possess? "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" (1 Corinthians 1:20).

Martin Luther said that every seven-year-old child knows what the church is – holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Good Shepherd (Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article XII). Jesus said: "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (Luke 18:17). To be sure, God has given you an intellect and He desires you to use it. The Almighty doesn't want you to neglect your intellect. By the power of God's Word, our intellect is to mature. But remember, God has His own ways, His own *Modus Operandi*, His own tactics. When we transpose the world's ideas of glory for His we have made a tragic mistake. The apex of God's glory is a suffering Messiah. It is bloody. He looks mired in poverty, weakness, shame because He *is* mired in poverty, weakness, and shame. My ways are not your ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:9). It is not the world's wisdom that will save you. It is not the super sophisticated who will claim you from your grave.

God became man (John 1:14). God laid aside His divine prerogatives and took up the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7). He had no physical beauty that we should desire Him (Isaiah 53:2). And in this humble, suffering servant lies all the power of the cosmos. He hides it, this power. He reveals it to little children.

You're familiar with hide and seek. God hides His glory in shame for the purpose of you finding it by faith. Finding it, not with your retinas, but with the eyes of your heart, with a revelation born of the Holy Spirit. God hides His power in weakness for the purpose of you finding it, treasuring it, relying upon it. God will not use man's tactics. Spiritually speaking, man's tactics don't work. They never have. And no matter how much the unbelieving world denigrates the genuine things of God, God will have His way. Christ's church is the gate of heaven (Genesis 28:17). The eternal kingdom of the Almighty breaks into this earthly realm through those things that look insignificant, look inconsequential – simple water in holy baptism, simple bread and wine in holy communion. God chooses the foolish things to shame the wise (1 Corinthians 1:27). The only question is whether or not you will embrace this truth, act on this truth. The world will not change. The world will continue to promote its false religion. The question is, what will you do?

Nathan Hale is a name that all elementary students used to be familiar with. Nathan Hale was an American spy during the Revolutionary War, and he was captured by the British and hanged – age 21. Imagine the risks he took. Imagine Nathan's devotion to the American cause. Nathan Hale could easily have been forgotten, just another casualty on the battlefield of freedom. But as he prepared to face his death at the gallows, he said something that rallied a nation: "I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country." What sentiment lies beneath that statement? Determination, belief, commitment. How do we manifest determination, belief, commitment in or Christian life? The principal thing that the culture around us will never be able to understand is something to which you resonate with your whole being. God is holy. Fallen man can't grasp and certainly can't imitate what is holy. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me" (Matthew 11:29). Christ is your teacher. You have learned from Him. His cross is His yoke. His holiness is His yoke. His grace is His yoke. What, in this world, compares with Christ and His cross, Christ and His holiness, Christ and His grace? Will you act like this is the foundation of your life? Will you gladly be a little child, an infant, or will you drink from the filthy cistern of humanism, commercialism, rank "me first" idolatry?

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Rest – how many of you need rest? I do. The good I want to do, I don't do. The evil I do not want is what I keep on doing (Romans 7:19). That statement convicts us all. Of all the sweeping passages of condemnation in God's Word, that is the easiest to understand. It is a universal indictment. You are a sinner. You possess a body of death. You drag your sinful nature with you wherever you go. Wretched man that you are, who will deliver you from your body of death? (Romans 7:24). Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Rest from your conscience, plagued with guilt. Rest from your sin, which soils your spirit and leaves you heavy laden. Come to Me! Christ is present in the Divine Service to serve you with His death and resurrection and give you rest in His holiness, His grace. Nathan Hale was a Christian.

He asked for a Bible and a clergyman as he faced the noose. Nathan knew where His rest was found.

Here is the portrait of our rest. The eternal Son of God yoked Himself to us. The Radiant Jewel of the Father took up the form of a servant, yoked Himself to us by taking upon Himself our flesh. He was born in a lowly place, laid in a lowly place, and grew up in a lowly place. God's ways are not our ways. A "no account" virgin was the mother of the King of the universe. Mocked, spit upon, cursed, and blasphemed – He prayed for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him as His blood flowed (Luke 23:34). Jesus yoked Himself to us on the cross. Baptism, which united you to His death and resurrection, has made you holy (Romans 6:1-11). You have been yoked to him. Christ's body and blood, on this altar, are holy. He yoked Himself to you that you might be yoked to Him. We are infants, little ones, drawn into His kingdom by grace. We are King Frank and Queen Helen, enthralled by Christ's humility and longing to have an honest face. When we are weak then we are strong because God's ways are higher than man's ways (2 Corinthians 12:10). The Greatest serves the least in this place (Matthew 23:11). Christ's call, "Come unto me" is realized here. We receive His service with joy and then we endeavor to love others as Christ has first loved us (1 John 4:19). Your faith does not rest on man's wisdom, but on the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:5). This is your Father's gracious will.