Reign of Christ Sunday 2026 **Sermon** Pr. Lyndon Sayers

David Horvitz is an artist in California who composed a performance art piece in 2007 titled “I will think about you.” This consisted of paying him $1 USD in exchange for him thinking about you for one minute. At the beginning of the minute he sent out an email with the subject line “Starting to think about you.” And after the minute was over, he sent a follow up email with the subject line, “The minute is up.” That was it. He wouldn’t respond to any further e-mails. I heard about this performance artwork because of Sage. Sage is currently a graduate student in the UK and used to be belong to Inclusive Christians at UVic, the ecumenical campus ministry group we support as a congregation. Sage found this at a gallery somewhere and receive these emails from the artist months after signing up and paying the dollar. Sage writes about this in his recent artist newsletter he sends out periodically to which I subscribe. He says that he wondered how to continue a relationship with people reading his newsletter. Following inspiration from David Horvitz, he set aside one minute to think about each person who subscribes to his newsletter. Here is an excerpt from Sage’s findings:

- there's a lot of different types of people on this list, some I know very well, some I don't know at all. one person has passed away. but every minute of attention was very emotional in its own way. affection, guilt, and curiosity were the most common emotions. and baffled-ness. some of you I'm just baffled by. not a bad thing, btw. some of my best friends are baffling.

- after the minute I felt a strong sense that I was glad that you existed. everyone on the list. I didn't try to make that happen. it was a surprise, actually, how immediately and naturally I felt that sense of good will. this convinced me of the utility of attention - it really does DO something. it has an effect. it tenderizes you.

- I have also been convinced that we can make deliberate decisions on what to direct our attention towards and what the quality of that attention is. and I think we MUST, actually. attention is base, the soil of action. the banality of evil depends on inattention, on complicit distraction. and I don't mean just awareness, in a shallow sense - I mean sustained quality attention. (Sage's Newsletter on Substack)

What Sage shares here is illustrative not just of the inspiration from the performance artwork but also a spiritual sense of prayer and connection. A side of Sage some of us witnessed in the Nativity production he mounted at Church of the Cross, Multifaith UVic, and Broad View United in a couple performances that featured other students with Inclusive Christians, including those you know in this congregation.

In today's gospel Jesus talks about attentiveness to people around us. It's from Matthew 25, counted among Jesus' greatest hits in the gospels. Jesus tells the parable of separating the sheep from the goats with a looming sense of divine judgment. The division is between a group of people who are attentive and prayerful to people in distress and those who are not. The attentive people find ways to help people who are hungry, in need of clothing, in prison, sick, etc. There are ways in which we practice this attentiveness with each other and neighbours in the congregation. And there are other times we or others feel lonely. There are times when each of us feels we need more attention. As the body of Christ, we are all included in this call to attentiveness, mutually remembering and being attentive to one another and neighbours.

Sage's example of saying the names and pausing for a minute to think about each person for a minute is one way that can change our relationship with the people around us. Taking time to pray, giving space for the Holy Spirit to stir within us. A Spirit that longs for us to be connected to one another. Knowing one another's names.

One example around remembering names, the Board of Care in the congregation is working on printing name tags for everyone in the church. It may take a few weeks, but we are working toward this. One step toward us knowing one another's names in order for us to get to know and pray for one another.

Jesus also mentions those we see around us who are hungry, without adequate clothing or housing. Knowing someone's name helps humanize them. If we see people on the street, sometimes starting by asking their name, and sharing our name, if we feel safe to do so, can be a place to start. Sometimes we're in a place to share something to eat, and can even take their order at the supermarket or take out. And to address long-term needs, a reminder of the need for us to support organizations like the Shelbourne Community Kitchen, Our Place, and Canadian Lutheran World Relief that help people year-round, and at scale in ways we cannot do as individuals. As well as community organizers like Greater Victoria Acting Together (GVAT) that seek to relieve the underlying reasons people need help to begin with. So that people have access to affordable housing, like the kind that will be available next door two years from now. And knowing people's names. Because Jesus illustrates that knowing our neighbours and responding to their needs is of divine significance. The safety of our own selves hangs in the balance of being accountable to our neighbours. And nowhere does Jesus speak more plainly of our conviction to help neighbours than he does in Matthew 25.

Today we are also celebrating the baptism of Sophia, whose name we say before God. In the baptismal rite we repeat Sophia's name and the sacrament of God's Word in, with, and under the water. God's blessing and the gift of the Holy Spirit is given unto Sophia through the water, in the laying on of hands, anointing of oil, and gift of the light of Christ in the candle. And together as a community we surround Sophia with the love of God in prayer, around the font, in song, and the presence of the assembly.

Connecting Jesus' commandments in Matthew 25 with the baptism of Sophia, grounds us in our own baptism and calling as Christians. Baptism reminds us that we too are named. We too are children of God. And as we

grow up, Jesus sends us out in the world to serve others. Everything else adds further encouragement: prayers, song, liturgy, relationships, knowing each other's names, laughter, study, work, sharing resources, sharing a cup of coffee. It all comes back to baptism and feeding and clothing others.

Returning to the story of Sage's newsletter, saying someone's name and thinking about them for one minute, is something for us to consider this Advent. Start with one person today. Find one minute sometime today or tomorrow and think about someone for one minute. Set a timer on your phone if it helps. Say a prayer about them or just meditate about them, connecting you in a more tender way as Sage put it.

And if you're feeling courageous, ask someone you don't know their name and just say hello. And if it it feels fitting, offer to pray for them. May the Spirit turn our hearts toward one another and all our neighbours, that the church live out our calling in Matthew 25. A calling of love of neighbour. Amen.