

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe November 26, 2017 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Ezek 34:11-12, 15-17

Thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will look after and tend my sheep. As a shepherd tends his flock when he finds himself among his scattered sheep, so will I tend my sheep. I will rescue them from every place where they were scattered when it was cloudy and dark. I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest, says the Lord GOD. The lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy, shepherding them rightly.

As for you, my sheep, says the Lord GOD, I will judge between one sheep and another, between rams and goats.

Psalm: Ps 23:1-2, 2-3, 5-6

R. (1) The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
In verdant pastures he gives me repose.

Beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.

You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for years to come.

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor 15:20-26, 28

Brothers and sisters: Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through man, the resurrection of the dead came also through man. For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life, but each one in proper order: Christ the firstfruits; then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ; then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to his God and Father, when he has destroyed every sovereignty and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. When everything is subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all.

Gospel: Matt 25:31-46

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."



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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

Not only is Sunday the feast of Christ the King, it is the last Sunday of the Church year! Advent will begin in a week! We should begin getting nervous about Christmas presents, shouldn't we? And family dinner? Or else why will we not have a family to celebrate with? Yes, but let us not get ahead of ourselves. For now we need only ask why the churches have chosen to mark Christ as "king." Did they think we would understand our year better this way? In a word, yes. We will be helped by looking at the Christ we have looked over the past months! And a revealing way to look is at the readings for Christ the King. Thus the shepherd imagery of the First Reading. We are asked if we have let God's sheep scatter over the face of the earth? Have we maybe eaten the sheep instead of tending them? If so, God said, "I myself will look after and tend my sheep. The injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal."

This is a beautiful passage. Throughout history, God continually sought out his people, we are told, inviting them to a mutual relationship. It is the foundation of our faith. He shepherds us today in the same way! Then the Responsorial Psalm, "The Lord is My Shepherd." If we are paying attention we see that God is still being the shepherd, as he promised. Goodness and kindness are all around us. God has us walk beside restful waters, through green pastures. Gratitude fills our hearts. In the Second Reading, St. Paul tells us about Christ, who is God's shepherding made concrete. In spite of the rampage of death and sorrow and sin, Christ brings the First Reading's light and peace to the world! Finally, the Gospel tells us in a parable who will get to have this light and peace. Not everyone! Some people have been goats instead.

Alright, how do we become sheep, in spite of our goatish tendencies? Or how do we become, at least sometimes, the sheep? Simple. We care for the Lord in other people. Yes. Instead of goatishly taking our own preferences as the goals for our lives, though we must do that too, we join God as the one who cares for others. We dip into the restful waters with Jesus, we offer everything, with him, for the poor and needy, not because it is simpler but because this is the way the Lord has taken among us as the very way of God. The way of the King. You see, the example is God, who gives according to the many needs of the least of his brothers and sisters. Instead of sleeping restfully in the slumber of non-acting, we are to join with Christ as one among very many shepherds. We are asked to say "yes." Yes to the God who loves without prejudice, to the Christ who spent life as a non entity, to the shepherd who would love his sheep to the very end. We will be cared for insofar as we care for them! Next week: the new year of God's love!

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. According to this reading, what kind of shepherd is the Lord God? If there is a message in this reading for people in Church leadership positions, what is it? What can you do to "bind up the injured and heal the sick"?
2. "For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death." Name some signs of "death or serious illness" that you see in the world, the environment or in your own family. What can you do to restore life? How can you help Christ accomplish the task of destroying death?
3. "This king is the almighty and glorious God. Why did he come into the world, in solidarity with the poor, wear thorns for his crown, and have a cross for his throne? Can you relate on a personal level to a to very rich, brilliant leader? How about to a poor and suffering one?"

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

Almighty ever-living God, whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the King of the universe, grant, we pray, that the whole creation, set free from slavery, may render your majesty service and ceaselessly proclaim your praise. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.