

PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY
Pastor John R. Hanson
November 26, 2023, 8:00 and 10:30 a.m.

PRELUDE

Julie Hanson, Musician

INTRODUCTION

Preparations for Christmas start again. But first Pentecost must end, and so we witness the vision of God's kingdom perfected in Christ. We encounter Christ as King and witness a view of Christ's world order. We finish Pentecost with the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats. This shifts our perceptions of what it means for Jesus to be the monarch of our lives and of the world. The picture this offers us is one of his realm - of welcome, grace, and calling to serve.

WELCOME AND VERSE

God of surprising generosity and unexpected grace, we have come to witness a miracle, to prepare our hearts for a new invasion of your light. We have come once again to open our souls and our lives to the divine birth. And in this sacred moment, we ask for your gentle presence to captivate and challenge us.

HYMN

"He Came Down"

Burgundy # 37

He came down that we may have love; he came down that we may have love;
He came down that we may have love; hallelujah forevermore.

He came down that we may have peace; he came down that we may have peace;
He came down that we may have peace; hallelujah forevermore.

He came down that we may have joy; he came down that we may have joy;
He came down that we may have joy; hallelujah forevermore.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION God is good. **All the time.**

GOSPEL: Matthew 25:31-46

Jesus tells a parable about judging the people as a shepherd who separates the "doers" from "don'ters," rejecting those who have failed to serve but embracing and welcoming those who have.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ³¹"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the

left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you

took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?' ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing?' ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' ⁴¹Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry

and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' ⁴⁴Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' ⁴⁵Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION All the time.

God is good!

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

We gather in the name of the Triune God,

the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We all have this in common, that we easily become like one who is unclean.

O God, do we concentrate too much on future signs instead of being prepared for your arrival? Have we distanced ourselves from you with our sin and iniquity? Have we forgotten we are your people, and you are our God? Do we really believe we are the clay and you are the potter? Save us, Lord, from the sins we know in our heart. Save us, Lord, from the sins we hide.

The Lord is our heavenly Father. We are being redeemed by the work of God's faithful hand through Jesus Christ. For Christ's sake our sins are forgiven. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we may be blessed with every spiritual gift and be continually strengthened in the fellowship of God's son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

HYMN

"Lead Me, Guide Me"

Burgundy # 70

I am weak and I need thy strength and pow'r to help me over my weakest hour.
Let me through the darkness thy face to see. Lead me, O Lord, lead me.

***Lead me, guide me along the way; for if you lead me, I cannot stray;
Lord, let me walk each day with thee. Lead me, O Lord, lead me.***

Help me tread in the paths of righteousness, be my aid when Satan and sin oppress.
I am putting all my trust in thee. Lead me, O Lord, lead me.

I am lost if you take your hand from me, I am blind without thy Light to see.
Lord, just always let me thy servant be. Lead me, O Lord, lead me.

THE NICENE CREED

WELCOME

SHARING OF THE PEACE

CHILDREN'S SERMON

“How to Shepherd!”

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Our caring God and Father, you who gave your beloved son to ransom all people can see our human fears and you love us anyway. Guide us into the season with quiet, glad anticipation. Help us to pay attention to the poor and needy and to the lonely among us. Give us a spirit of reflection, patience with each other, and hearts brimming with thanks. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

READING: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

God promises to rescue God's sheep like a good shepherd and to bring them to a fertile land and then to judge between the sheep, protecting the weak from the bullies.

¹¹Thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. ¹²As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. ¹⁴I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down,

says the Lord GOD. ¹⁶I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice. ²⁰Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, ²²I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. ²³I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

READING: 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

Paul clarifies for us since Christ has been raised from the dead: Our preaching is not in vain. Our faith is not in vain. We are not false witnesses. We have been delivered from our sin. Those who died in Christ have not perished. Our destiny is with God!

But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. ²¹For since death came through a human, the resurrection of the dead has

also come through a human, ²²for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. ²³But each in its own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those

who belong to Christ. ²⁴Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.”

But when it says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under him. ²⁸When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.

HYMN

“Come by Here, Lord”

Burgundy # 43

Come by here, my Lord, kum ba yah; come by here, my Lord, kum ba yah;
Come by here, my Lord, kum ba yah; O Lord, kum ba yah.

Someone's singing Lord, kum ba yah; someone's singing, Lord, kum ba yah;
Someone's singing, Lord, kum ba yah; O Lord, kum ba yah;

Someone's praying, Lord, kum ba yah; someone's praying, Lord, kum ba yah;
Someone's praying, Lord, kum ba yah; O Lord, kum ba yah.

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SERMON - *To fully live means to care. We don't assume that we are numbered (remembered). There are actions and disciplines that we are to exhibit in our daily life. These are not burdensome, these are the foundation for the way we express our faith!*

HYMN

“He Leadeth Me”

Green # 501

He leadeth me: oh, blessed thought! Oh, words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be, still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

***He leadeth me, he leadeth me, by his own hand he leadeth me.
His faithful foll'wer I would be, for by his hand he leadeth me.***

Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine, nor ever murmur nor repine;
Content, whatever lot I see, since 'tis my God that leadeth me.

And when my task on earth is done, when by thy grace the victory's won,
E'en death's cold wave I will not flee, since God through Jordan leadeth me.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

BLESSING & PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lord, look on an empty vessel that needs to be filled. In faith I am weak — strengthen me. In love I am cold—warm me and make me fervent so that my love may go out to my neighbor. I doubt and am unable to trust you completely. Lord, strengthen my faith and trust in you. You are all the treasure I possess. I am poor, you are rich, and you

came to have mercy on the poor. I am a sinner, you are goodness. From you I can receive goodness, but I can give you nothing. Therefore, I shall stay with you. Amen. (Martin Luther)

BENEDICTION

The blessing of our merciful God is upon you, receive his redeeming grace, enfolding love, and experience his enduring fellowship. May God protect you along the way; may Christ Jesus keep you alert and prepared; and may the Holy Spirit guide you on your path.

Amen!

As we leave from here, remember this: All God's gifts are right in front of you! Not only that, but God himself is right alongside to keep you steady and on track until Jesus returns. God who got you started in this spiritual adventure will do this, for he is faithful. God will never give up on you.

We go in Christ's name!

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Worship, as an action, continues to change.

Use the space on the back to guide your thoughts as the Spirit may lead you.

Use this time to center your distractions in order to help activate your worship.

It is tempting to think of God as "our" Shepherd, and God's pastures as "our" home, and then to exclude those who don't fit with "us." In our churches and communities, and even in our families and social circles, this sorting of society according to our categories and sensibilities is ubiquitous. But it is also a massive exercise in completely missing the point. When we are faced with the parables and readings of this week, we cannot help but see that God's sorting method is wholly different. In fact, it isn't even, really, God who does the sorting, it's us!

The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats may, at first glance be a parable of judgement, but that's not the point of it. The point is whether we have learned from Christ enough, whether we have become intimate enough with Jesus, that we can recognize him even when he looks out at us through his "distressing disguise" as Mother Teresa put it. Then, if we have learned to see Jesus even in the outcast, we will have learned to see & experience God's reign in our own lives. But, if we haven't learned to see Jesus, we wouldn't know how to recognize God's reign, even if it would kick us in the pants!

The challenge, then, is for us to release our obsession with sorting, and to focus instead on seeing – seeing Christ in people – and on serving – serving others as though they were Jesus himself. Then, we will have entered the reign of God without even trying and we will see and experience God's reign in every place and every moment. The hard part is for us to make the conscious and difficult decision to recognize Christ in all others. It takes work and imagination, grace and a willingness to let go of our pride, our control and our natural tendency to stick with people like us.

It's a scandalous truth – which Matthew's readers must have choked on at first – that everyone belongs. It's only those who cannot find a way to accept this who ultimately end up excluding themselves. The Shepherd really does welcome everyone, and those who are willing to follow the Shepherd's example, discover this to be true for themselves. How we can be the inclusive, God's-reign-reflecting community that God calls us to be?!

Devotion resources from John van de Laar at Sacredise.com