

Matthew 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 on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put 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; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

***Our Lord Jesus Christ
King of the Universe
23rd November 2020***



The best way to honour Christ our King is to work for the unfolding and promoting of his kingdom. In working for the relief of deprived, oppressed or marginalised people, we are serving Christ in person, because he fully identified with people in need, right up to his final moment in this life. The disciple of Christ the King cannot afford the luxury of living in a gated community, resolutely secure in a fortress, comfortably “keeping myself to myself” with the lame claim that “I do nobody any harm.” To be deaf to the cries of my neighbour in need is to be deaf to Christ. To be blind to the anguish of the dying is to be blind to Christ. To recognise Jesus Christ as our Shepherd-king involves being carers or shepherds in some way ourselves; for the work of the Kingdom goes on until he comes again

Opening Prayer

Father all powerful, God of love, you have raised our Lord Jesus Christ from death to life, resplendent in glory as King of creation. Open our hearts, free all the world to rejoice in his peace, to glory in his justice, to live in his love. Bring all people together in Jesus Christ your Son, whose kingdom is with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever.

Ezekiel 34: 11-12. 15-17

The Lord says this: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak. I will shepherd the flock with justice. As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats.

Ezekiel pictures a shepherd standing in the midst of his scattered sheep. Sheep spread out to munch on grass and other plants when a shepherd leads them to a meadow. Only when it is time to go does he call them all together in a group. Ezekiel uses this idea of scattered sheep to image the exile: God's people have been spread abroad and about. God, as the good shepherd, will come to "rescue" them from the places where they have been scattered. Normally, shepherds don't need to rescue sheep, but Ezekiel is extending the metaphor to a new height, making the scattered destinations of the sheep into places of exile and banishment from which the Lord will deliver them.

When it comes to the final sheep judging, we don't want the judge to find mangy wool, uneven haunches, and broken teeth on us, nor do we want to be accounted among the bad shepherds who fail to fulfil their responsibilities. What we do in our relationships with other people indicates where our heart is in relation to God. Yet of course, as sheep, we need to rely on the good shepherd for a constant supply of grace, that we might be like him in all of the pastures where we have shepherding duty. Only then can we be found on the right side of the sheep judging.

Psalm 22

*The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose
Near restful waters he leads me, to revive my drooping spirit.
He guides me along the right path; he is true to his name.
You have prepared a banquet for me in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is overflowing.
Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell for ever and ever.*

1 Corinthians 15: 20-26. 28

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the first-fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, 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 he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.



Paul visualises Jesus Christ handing over the kingdom to God the Father at the end of time. This ideal kingdom is not something merely hoped for as a future gift, but something being worked for by Christians in the present time. The kingdom is indeed to be hoped for, but somehow it is also *in our midst*, in the process of becoming.

Alleluia, Alleluia!

*Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord!
Blessings on the coming kingdom of our father David!*

Alleluia!

(Gospel & Reflection overleaf)

Prayer over the Offerings

*Lord, we offer you the sacrifice by which your Son reconciles creation.
May it bring unity and peace in the world.*

Today's gospel shows how we are to promote the fuller coming of God's kingdom in our world. It comes whenever justice is done for the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, and the oppressed. To behave in this way is to imitate the Shepherd-King himself who is presented in our Gospels as one who eases alienation, who feeds, gives rest, heals and makes strong. Among his final words was a promise to the thief being crucified at his side, that he would be enfolded by the eternal love of God, in paradise.

The crown that Jesus wears is a crown of thorns. His throne is the cross; his royal banner is a scribbled sign that he is King of the Jews. That is the Gospel image of royalty; the king and the criminal who go together into paradise. He wishes to reign, not as some sort of dictator over our lives, watching our every move, but as a king who wishes to reign in our hearts.

You may recall that wonderful painting by William Holman Hunt entitled 'The light of the world', in which it shows Jesus, crowned with thorns gently knocking on the door, a door with no handle. The only way to open the door is from the inside, the only way that Jesus can enter in to our lives is for us to open the door of our hearts to let him in. May His kingdom come.

Prayer after Communion

Lord, you give us Christ, the King of all creation, as food for everlasting life.

*Help us to live by his gospel and bring us to the joy of his kingdom,
where he lives and reigns for ever and ever.*