

## **Men's Bible Study – Tuesday, November 17, 2020 (8:30 am) – Christ the King**

**I. The Common Thread:** God is our shepherd; he will find those lost sheep who are his own. If they have become injured, he will heal them. If they are abused, he will strengthen them with justice. He is the Good Shepherd, the Rock of our salvation, the Great King above all gods, the Creator of everything. So, he is able to care for his sheep who are held protectively in the palm of his mighty hand. Even death itself cannot shake us from his hand. We are kept there so that we may behold his glory on that Day. Then he will separate the goats from the sheep, ushering his flock into the kingdom that he has prepared for them in his great love. Schlitz Beer (1950's): "You only go around once in life, so you have to grab for all the gusto you can get!" **Or, live for the Glory of God!**

### **II. TEXT: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20–24 – The LORD God, our Shepherding King, will seek them out!**

1. Ezekiel holds **justice & care** together. The reading is reminiscent of Ps. 23 in its rich description of God's care in gathering, resettling, and feeding His flock in good pasture (34:11-16). Yahweh will be shepherd to Israel His beloved sheep; **reversing the abuses of the false shepherds** (34:1-11).  
2. **Justice & care** belong together because the **shepherd metaphor** was always first and foremost **a political metaphor**. To be a king was to be a shepherd; viewed from that perspective the more surprising element of the shepherd metaphor may be the way it shapes perceptions about **the proper exercise of power**. What the shepherd metaphor emphasizes, then, is the ruler's responsibility to establish justice so that the people may flourish. *"Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep"* (34:2b-3). This exploitation does not simply damage the flock, it results in its scattering, leaving individual sheep vulnerable to further prey and the flock subject to yet further disintegration.

### **III. TEXT: Psalm 95:1-7a – Our God Reigns! Let Us Sing Songs of Praise!**

1. This Psalm is a hymn of praise that includes a prophetic warning. It celebrates & interprets **the reign of God** in the congregation's liturgical setting. Jewish tradition ties the psalm to the beginning of Sabbath; others have suggested the Feast of Tabernacles or a covenant renewal festival. Vv 1-7 offer praise to God in the form of **a double call to worship** (**God is both Creator & Redeemer**). The first summons to praise is in **vv 1-2** followed by reasons for the praise in vv 3-5. The second call to worship in **vs 6** narrows the focus to God's covenant people, and verse 7 gives the reason for that call to praise. The last line of vs 7 introduces a prophetic word from God, an oracle. In other words **the first seven verses call the congregation to come to worship and the last verses deliver the sermon**. See LBW pages 131f – Matins—Morning Prayer.

2. In the book of Psalms, this text comes in **a cluster of psalms that celebrate the Kingship of YHWH**, an emphasis appropriate for Christ the King Sunday. The emphasis on YHWH's Kingship forms a response to the crisis of exile articulated at the end of **Book III in Psalm 89**. The Davidic Kingdom has fallen, but the Kingship of YHWH endures as a sign of hope for the community.

### **IV. TEXT: I Corinthians 15:20-28 – Fact Checking! But IN FACT Christ has been Raised!**

1. God's people used to offer firstfruits of the harvest in thanks for a full harvest to come. **They gave the very first of what grew**, trusting in God for tomorrow. **Paul equates Christ to the firstfruits of an eternal harvest**. He was the prior offering of thanksgiving for a fuller harvest to follow. When

death, the last enemy, is destroyed, the full harvest of the Kingdom will occur. At the return of "Christ the firstfruits," all those who belong to Christ (Gal 5:24), including "the dead in Christ" (1 Thessalonians 4:16), will be raised in the harvest to come. Jesus' death and resurrection was the beginning of something that would happen for all who believe in him. **Adam/Christ Typology!**

**TEXT: Matthew 25:31-46 – God's going to Get Your Goat! The Final Judgment—Separation Time!**

1. **Matthew 24-25** is the fifth in Jesus' five teaching discourses (sermons) in the Gospel of Matthew. This is a **Sermon on the End Times...The Day of the Lord**; The Sermon on the Judgment of God. The parable in Matthew 25:31-46 is the last of four consecutive judgment parables located in **Jesus' eschatological discourse (24:1-25:46)** where he instructs his disciples to endure through difficult times and to live in anticipation of the Lord's return. Like all the parables in this section, it exemplifies the certainty of the Lord's coming and how the disciples are to live in the meantime (**Interim Ethics; the shape of our waiting**). How are we to live as we wait for our Lord's return? **Thus far:** Parable of Waiting Servant (wise or wicked servants?), Ten Bridesmaids (Play it safe—Faith must be shared, but it cannot be borrowed), Talents (Better safe than sorry; not always. Take a Chance for Heaven's Sake). The **Sheep & the Goats** (When Lord? I don't Recall.). The shape of our waiting **as we live in the END TIMES;** Passover is only 2 days away. Setting is Holy Week.

2. We are **justified by faith alone; but faith is never alone**. Faith without works is dead. An element of surprise permeates our text. Neither the "sheep" nor the "goats," as it turns out, had any idea of what they were doing. Echoing a popular Reformation era theme, this reading suggests that we are justified by our faith after all, as our "good works" do not justify us but rather flow unconsciously from the love of God that has been freely poured into our hearts. We inherit the Kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world. Good works = deeds that we don't remember.

**Discipleship is NOT works righteousness, IT IS the gift of salvation.**

3. Before we can "**be Christ**" to our neighbor we need also to "**see Christ**" in our neighbor. Where do we look to meet Christ? Expect to see/meet God in unexpected places ("the least of these"). Matthew is all about doing what Jesus commands! Matthew's insistence upon doing what Jesus says does not exclude grace. **Judgment in Matthew typically involves an element of surprise.** Those who fail to observe Jesus' teaching are surprised, even though they prophesy, cast out demons, and perform wondrous works in his name (**7:21-22**). For Matthew, ethical behavior indeed responds to Jesus' commands. But it does not result from effort, from trying hard. Instead, as Matthew points out -- repeatedly -- good fruit comes from good trees. John the Baptist warns of trees that fail to bear good fruit (3:10). Good trees, Jesus explains, cannot bear bad fruit, nor can bad trees bear good fruit (7:17-18). John and Jesus alike warn that the bad trees will be cast into the fire. Trees are known by their fruit (12:33). Likewise, good soil produces good fruit (13:23).

4. **When the Son of Man comes** he will sit on His glorious throne and all the **NATIONS** (Great Commission) will be gathered before him (Judgment Day). **Separation is inevitable and unavoidable** (eternal punishment or eternal life; weeping & gnashing of teeth or the joy of your master?). Judgment is God's business, not ours. **See Matthew 13** – Parables of the Drag Net and the Wheat and Tares. Passover is 2 days away and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified. The one who will one day come to JUDGE us is the same one who first came to be judged for us. The cross assures us that God's judgment for repentant sinners is mercy...**FOR YOU!**