

Scripture Study

Solemnity of Christ the King – Cycle A



Opening prayer

Ezekiel 34:11-12,15-17

(Ps 23:1-3,5-6)

1 Corinthians 15:20-26,28

Matthew 25:31-46

Overview of the Gospel:

- This Sunday is the Solemnity of Christ the King. It is the last Sunday of the liturgical year; next Sunday begins Advent, the penitential season of waiting and expectation.
- Jesus' three preceding parables about being prepared (Matthew 24: 42-51; 25:1-13; 25:14-30) are completed by his announcement of the Final Judgment at the end of time when he will sit on his throne and judge the nations, that is, all men (see Ezekiel 34:17-20; Daniel 7:9-14; John 5:25-29; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Revelation 20:11-15).
- Christ identifies himself with those in need and all are judged and rewarded by him by how they ministered to him through them (Matthew 16:16-27; Romans 2:6-11). Faith alone is not the basis—in fact faith is not mentioned here or in the preceding parables.
- Jesus himself also makes it clear that both heaven and hell are very real—and eternal.

Questions:

- In the 1st Reading, the Lord is depicted as a Good Shepherd who tends the weak among his flock. He is also portrayed, however, as a just judge. Upon what is his judgment based (see Ezekiel 34:17-24)?
- In the 2nd Reading, St. Paul describes how he and his fellow evangelists have spent themselves in the service of the Gospel. What, surprisingly, is his own response to this? Would that be your reaction in a similar situation?
- List the six actions Jesus will use as a basis of judgment. What kinds of acts are these? For whom are they done now and ultimately (verse 40)? How do they benefit the doer?
- How are those who don't do the acts and those that do them similar? Different?
- In this reading and those of the last few weeks, how were Jesus and his opponents different in actions and attitudes? Is the judgment note of these readings consistent with your view of Jesus? Why or why not?
- What do these readings teach about Christian responsibility? Who are "these least brothers of mine"?
- When have you been hungry, thirsty, a stranger, in need of clothes, sick or imprisoned, and someone reached out to you? How did it feel?
- In the six areas noted by Jesus, where do you feel yourself serving most naturally? In which areas do you have the most trouble reaching out?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 544, 668-682, 1038-1041, 1503, 2443-2449, 2463

Closing prayer

We have, I admit, a rigorous account to give of our sins; but who will be our judge? The Father...has given all judgment to the Son. Let us be comforted: the eternal Father has placed our cause in the hands of our Redeemer Himself. St. Paul encourages us, saying, 'Who is [the judge] who is to condemn us? It is Jesus Christ, who died...who indeed intercedes for us' (Romans 8:34). It is the Savior Himself, who, in order that He should not condemn us to eternal death, has condemned Himself to death for our sake, and who, not content with this, still continues to intercede for us in Heaven with God His Father. --St. Alphonsus Liguori

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

“The King will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you’”

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 25:31-46*

Meditation: Do you recognize that Jesus Christ has been given full authority and power to rule over the earth as well as heaven? The Father in heaven sent his son into the world to redeem us from slavery to sin and Satan. And he promises that his son will return again at the end of the world to complete the work he began in his first coming. When the Son of Man, a Messianic title from the Book of Daniel, returns in glory he will judge between nations and individuals - separating those who rejected his claim as true King and Lord over heaven and earth. Jesus was crucified for his claim to be the Messianic King who would rule not only over his people Israel but ultimately over all the nations as well. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus triumphed over sin and death and won the right to rule as Lord and King over all.

What is the significance or meaning of Jesus' kingship for us? Kingship today seems antiquated, especially in democratic societies where everyone is treated equal and free. God at first did not want to give his people Israel a king. Why? Because God alone was their King and they needed no other. Nonetheless, God relented and promised his people that through David's line he would establish a kingship that would last for eternity (Psalm 89:29). The Jews understood that the Messiah would come as king to establish God's reign for them. They wanted a king who would free them from tyranny and from foreign domination. Many had high hopes that Jesus would be the Messianic king. Little did they understand what kind of kingship Jesus claimed to have. Jesus came to conquer hearts and souls for an imperishable kingdom, rather than to conquer perishable lands and entitlements.

Jesus told a parable about sheep and goats to illustrate how he would judge when he returns in glory. What happens when you put sheep and goats



together? Jesus' audience readily understood the need for separating the two. In arid lands, like Israel, goats and sheep often grazed together during the day because green pasture was sparse. At nightfall, when the shepherd brought the sheep and goats to their place of rest, he separated them into two groups. Goats by temperament are aggressive, domineering, restless, and territorial. They butt heads with their horns whenever they think someone is intruding on their space.

What's the point of this story for us? The kind of life we choose to live now and the moral choices we make will have consequences that determine our future – for better or for worse. Separation is an inevitable consequence of judgment. The Day of Judgment will reveal who had true faith in God and who lived according to God's command to love him first above all else and to love one's neighbor as oneself, with true compassion and mercy (see Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18). Jesus calls us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We are not called to flee the society around us nor to disdain those who treat us unfavorably or unfairly. We are to be leaven in a society that needs God's healing love and forgiveness. When we let our light shine we allow others to see God's love, truth, and compassion in the way we speak and treat them. God has

shown us his incredible mercy and loving-kindness through his Son, Jesus Christ, who came to save us from the tyranny of sin and Satan, and a world blinded by vanity and deception. We are ambassadors for Christ and our mission is to bring his light, truth, and merciful love to those who stumble in darkness, ignorance, and unbelief.

As much as we might like to judge the parables, the parables, nonetheless, judge us by pointing out the consequences of the choices we make and the kind of life we choose to follow. Jesus teaches us a very important lesson about loving our neighbor and taking responsibility for others. God will judge us not only for the wrong we have done but also for what we have failed to do. Now is the time of God's mercy, for seeking his help and grace to turn away from sin, and to walk in his way of love. We can love freely, generously, and unconditionally because God has already poured his love into our hearts through the gift and working of his Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). Ask the Holy Spirit to purify your heart that you may love as God loves and live charitably with all.

The scriptures present us with the choice between two kingdoms – the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. The choice is ours. Which kingdom do you serve? God's kingdom lasts forever because it is built on the foundation of God's love and justice. To accept Jesus as Lord and King is to enter a kingdom that will last forever where righteousness, love, truth, and peace dwell. Is your life submitted to the Lordship of Jesus?

“Lord Jesus Christ, you are my King and there is no other. May your love rule in my heart that I may think and act with charity towards all.”

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