

## LECTIONARY REFLECTIONS PROPER 29, YEAR A

### CHRIST THE KING

The Rev. Susan B. Haynes

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

**Psalm 100**

**Ephesians 1:15-23**

**Matthew 25:31-46**

#### **Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24**

This is the last Sunday of this liturgical year, Year A, in the three year cycle A,B,C. Next Sunday will begin a new church liturgical year, Year B and will be the first Sunday of Advent. The last Sunday of the liturgical year is known as “Christ the King” or “The Reign of Christ” Sunday. Scriptural themes focus on the reign of Christ and the perfect Kingdom of God. The description of the “kingdom,” however, as it presents in the Scriptures this week, describes a reign that is different from what we might think of as kingdom-like. The king is not a mighty warrior who destroys other kingdoms, but a personage of humility – in fact a shepherd who tends sheep and goats. From the prophet, Ezekiel, the shepherd is one who searches, rescues, gathers, feeds, waters and makes to rest. He binds up the injured and makes the weak strong. He destroys the fat and strong. He saves the flock. The shepherd is clearly in the place of God, caring for every need the sheep could possibly have. The sheep have only to submit to the shepherd’s tending, and they will be well.

***Many of us might resist the idea of submitting to a king who would have all authority over us. We are stubborn and resistant to hand over the control of our lives. But sometimes we get tired, and what a blessing it would be to include ourselves in the safety of a sheepfold tended by someone who could care for us entirely! Sometimes surrendering control is a blessing. What areas of your life could use the watchful eye of a shepherd who knows your needs? What would be a relief to let go of?***

#### **Psalm 100**

Psalm 100 is a call to specific actions. We are called to be joyful. We are called to serve the Lord with gladness (not reluctance). We are called to enter into God’s presence with thanksgiving and praise and to sing in His presence. We are called to thank Him continually and to call on His name whenever we need assistance. Sounds like we belong to a King, doesn’t it? ***Psalm 100 is one of the psalms appointed for Morning Prayer in the Daily Office, to be used as an invitation into the presence of God. A suggested discipline for this week might be to use these reminders daily to orient yourself as to whom you belong and from whom you gain your daily source of strength.***

#### **Ephesians 1:15-23**

Paul prays for the Christians at Ephesus that they will receive a spirit of wisdom and revelation. To make a decision to belong to Christ the King is the beginning of a journey, not the end. The more one travels the Christian path, the more one receives wisdom and revelation. This wisdom reveals truths about the hope to which we are called, about the community of saints to which we belong and about the power

that is made manifest through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The image presented at the end of the Scripture about Christ being the head with all things under his feet is a powerful image of a Ruler who rules with confidence and authority.

***All things come under the feet of Christ. All things are under his authority. This means that whatever confronts us as human beings is subject to the authority of Christ and cannot get dominion over us. What confronts you in your life? What is it that you need to place under the feet and kingship of Christ?***

### **Matthew 25:31-46**

The Gospel lesson takes up again the theme of sheep (and goats). In this reading, the king is presented once again as a shepherd, this time a shepherd whose job it is to separate sheep from goats. There's not much difference between sheep and goats. In many cases, just looking, it is hard to tell the difference. There is a difference, however, in the way that they feed – sheep like to graze and look down for their food. Goats are browsers and will eat leaves off of bushes and low-lying trees. While a sheep is not necessarily better than a goat, in this lesson, for the sake of argument, the sheep are seen as superior and when separated out, are placed on the right. An analogy comes into play that suggests that the ones on the right are the ones who have done the will of God, who have seen the face of the King in the faces of the poor and disenfranchised and who have ministered to them. The goats are cursed because even though they saw the face of the king in those on the outside, they did nothing to minister to them. There was no connection or relationship established so in the end, the king did not know them. It is clear, in this reading that the job of separation is to be done by the King/Shepherd. He seems to be the only one who knows the difference. His knowledge comes from relationship. In many regards, this analogy is similar to the one established in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, where the weeds grow up in the field of wheat and at first are indistinguishable from the wheat plants. Only the angels can separate. Only the Shepherd can separate. The goats and the sheep cannot separate themselves. ***We like to separate. We like to put some people in one category and some in another category. We want people who are different from us to be separate from us. But we are not the ones who know how to separate. Only God knows the difference, and only He can do the separation. In our politically and culturally divisive climate these days, isn't it easy to separate those who think differently from us and to put them away from us. Why don't we all challenge ourselves this week to connect, truly connect, with someone who is different and try to see that person as a child of God...just as we would like to be seen?***

### **COLLECT:**

Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings, and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.