



Sunday November 22, 2020
Christ the King Sunday

Pastor Chris Marien
Matthew 25:31-46

I am grateful for your prayers and well-wishes. It has been a journey these last two weeks. And as I rounded out Day 9, I knew I had watched too much television and Netflix movies and Amazon prime videos when I woke up Thursday morning and remembered a dream I had had the night before. I was flying the Millennium Falcon from Star Wars with Queen Elizabeth as my co-pilot; Melissa McCarthy was chasing me as an agent from the CIA; and somewhere behind me was Santa and his sleigh. Too much television – too much mixed together.

The Sunday school teacher was talking about Matthew 25:31-46, and the parable of the sheep and the goats. “If all the bad people in the world were painted green and all the good people painted red, what color would you be?” A small hand went up. “Striped,” came the response. Oh, the wisdom of children. It is Christ the King Sunday. Today we hear the glory of God and we bear witness to the day when the Son of Man will come in glory and all the angels with him. The world will kneel before him and the Lord will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. And that, my friends, is the end of the story. For the sheep—eternal life. For the goats—eternal punishment. We could spend the day—debating who are sheep and who are goats. We could also spend the day pointing out why we are worthy to be called a lamb instead of a goat. Neither one interests me this day. Instead, I would rather preach to the moment in the Gospel this day, most of us have probably missed. I have missed it myself again and again in the years I have been called to preach on this Christ the King Sunday. So today, we leave the sheep and the goats behind—we leave behind the judgment, the begging, the hoping, the praying and this day we take time to revel in something that offers us the chance to see the Kingdom of God that awaits us.

A day is coming. The Kingdom of God is coming. I know this to be true. Here the words of God in Jesus Christ. Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Those words, my friends, bring the promise of God to fullness. And that promise is what gives hope to a world weary in its suffering. That should be enough in itself to bring us to our knees in worship and praise of our God. And yet, even those words, are not what offer us the thin place this day. No on this day—we hear something even more precious to our ears. Lord when was it...did you catch it...Lord when was...Has anything more beautiful ever been spoken. The promise is real. The promise brings life. The promise is life—new life that is spoken to us this day all through one little word we would miss with most readings. When the King speaks this day—the king speaks to us that everything we have known—hunger, thirst, loneliness, vulnerability, disease, and imprisonment—in every form possible is no more. Thanks be to God! And yet it is almost too good to be true. We do have expectations—don’t we? We have expectations of what heaven will be. We have expectations of what eternal life will be in the presence of God. We have expectations of the Kingdom of God we will one day enter.

Here the words of Revelation 21... Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." And again, from Revelation 22... Then the angel showed me the river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It flowed down the center of the main street. One each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations. No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever. Amen! Come, Lord Jesus.

This is Christ the King Sunday. We bow in reverence and worship to God in Jesus Christ. We offer ourselves to God's mission in the world. We follow obediently in the footsteps of our Savior. And we look to the glory of God coming on the clouds—the Son of God coming in power to the world. No longer the lamb to the slaughter. Now the lion will roar and there will be no mistaking the identity of our King—the King of kings—Jesus the Christ. There will be no mistaken identity because Jesus comes for you and for me. Jesus comes to each of us to remind of us of our great worth in the eyes of God. So great our worth—that God will send Jesus to us again—this time to literally lift us up into heaven on the appointed day—the hour of God's own choosing.

Dear God, may you carry us each day in the very palm of your hand. Let your story be our story, God. Help us to write the next sentence of our stories each day of our lives reflecting your light into the world. And when the son of man comes in his glory. When Jesus comes to the world once again enthroned in power and might. May our stories written in this life—offer glory and honor and praise to you—that we might inherit the promise of the life to come. Amen. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.