

Lessons for The Last Sunday of the Church Year**November 26, 2023**

Psalm 95:1–7a ~ *The Matins call to praise the Lord, King of all creation and Lord of his people.*

Ezekiel 34:11–16, 20–24 ~ *God himself will gather his scattered flock and be their shepherd.*

1 Corinthians 15:20–28 ~ *Christ is the first fruits of the dead, who has destroyed death for us.*

Matthew 25:31–46 ~ *The Son of Man will separate the righteous and unrighteous like sheep from goats.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: Long Live the Shepherd King Forever!

When Ezekiel gave God's stern warning to the rulers who had scattered the flock of Israel, he assured the people that God Himself would be their shepherd to gather them together into one flock. Jesus did that by laying down His life for His sheep and, in His resurrection, becoming the first fruits from the dead. He will return again, as the Shepherd King, to gather the sheep from the goats and welcome them into the eternal kingdom which He prepared by His death and resurrection for all who trust in Him.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord Jesus, as I eagerly wait for Your return, keep the thrill in my love for You, the hope of heaven in my heart, and the shape of faith in my witness of Your redeeming love. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: Natural and man-made disasters have all caused great suffering for the human race. God has given His people great resources to meet the needs of those who suffer, and in that caring, to give witness to the mercy of God.

OFFERING PRAYER: O Lord, we celebrate Your love; we glory in Your grace!
We meet You in the "least of these," and see Your pleading face.
We hear You in their cries, O Lord, and to Your word pay heed;
Now may the bounty You have given us, be used to ease their need. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: How many times have we failed to see the need of those around us and passed by unknowingly? Even more devastating, we have often seen the need and passed by intentionally! And yet, in Christ, God has fed our hunger and slaked our thirst, come to us when we were strangers, clothed us with a robe of righteousness, visited and healed our sickness and our imprisonment! He is the One who has loved us from the least of these to become the righteous ones who are blessed by the Father!

Questions to Consider: If Christ is the King, who are the loyal subjects of his kingdom?

- What are the forces that scatter the flock of the new Israel today?
- When does the reign of Christ as King begin? How long does it last?
- On what basis are the righteous and the unrighteous separated?
- What do those who have been rescued by Christ have in common with Jesus?