

Christ the King

November 26, 2023



[God] therefore will do the same with Christians that he did with Christ, whom he raised up from the locked and sealed grave in the twinkling of an eye, so that in the selfsame moment he was in it and out of it.

– Martin Luther –

Sermon at the Funeral of Duke John of Saxony

PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

Ezekiel 34:11–16, 20–24

A shepherd's job description includes feeding sheep and making sure they don't get lost or in trouble. In contrast with the shepherds of Israel, who have been taking care of themselves rather than God's people while in exile, God himself promises to come and be the Shepherd who will care for his sheep. The Lord promised to find his beloved sheep, feed them, and lead them to good land.

- What are some of the ways in which the “shepherds” were abusing their positions? (See the beginning of Ezekiel 34.) What does this passage tell us about the role of pastors in the life of the congregation? Even so, who can do this best?
- Compare what is said here with what Jesus himself says in John 10:11–16. What are the similarities between the two texts? What are the differences?

In verses 20–22, God declared that he will judge between the fat sheep, who are the rich oppressors, and the lean sheep, who are the poor and humble.

- Discuss the richness of the image found in Ezekiel 34:20. What do you see in your mind's eye when you read this?

In verse 24, the Lord says: “I will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them.” But this verse was written long after David was dead and gone, and his kingdom has long since been divided.

- How does this prophecy point toward the person and work of Christ, the Good Shepherd? In what sense is Christ the Lord both God and a Davidic prince among us?

Psalms 95:1–7a

The Lord God is king, and in his hands are the heights and depths of the whole creation. The psalmist sang that the Lord's name is to be exalted “above all gods.” The image of God as King in this psalm paints a glorious picture of a creator who rules with compassion and tenderness. The psalm mixes metaphors by combining the images of king, craftsman, and shepherd. He urged the people to have warm hearts toward the loving God, not like the ancestors who fussed and complained at Massah and Meribah (Exodus 17:7).

- What do kings and shepherds have in common? How do both professions require attention to a group of many?
- Does disobedience toward God result in any consequences today? Has that changed in Jesus Christ or do we still suffer when we go against the Lord?

1 Corinthians 15:20–28

Paul explained that Jesus was the “firstfruits” of the dead. This term means that his death and resurrection was the beginning of something that would happen for all who believe in him.

- How does Paul's interpretation of Christ's death and resurrection give you certainty of your own eternity?
- How is Christ's death and resurrection a sign of God's willingness to give his people a priceless offering? Does God's sacrifice encourage you to live more sacrificially?

Matthew 25:31–46

At the final judgment, the Son of Man will come with all the angels and sit on his throne as King, to separate people the way a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Notice again that the metaphors of King and Shepherd are combined, but here the flock includes “all nations.”

- Is Christ the King only of those who believe in him? Who is included in this end-time flock?

The sign of who will inherit the kingdom is evident in how the people treat those in need around them. They will be the ones who fed the hungry, visited the imprisoned, and welcomed the stranger.

- In what ways do we serve Christ himself when we serve the “least of these?” In what ways do we neglect Christ by neglecting those in need? Do you ever feel convicted if you cannot meet all of these opportunities?
- Going through the list of actions ascribed to the sheep, how did Christ himself do all these things? In what sense do we, as the sheep, imitate and follow the Shepherd?

In verse 34, the King says to his faithful sheep that the kingdom was prepared for them “before the foundation of the world” and that they are the ones who have been “blessed by my Father.”

- In what sense does that firmly tie both justification and sanctification to God's sovereign election? Is God simply responding to our works, or is God actually fulfilling his work in us?

The Reformers penned in the Formula of Concord, On Good Works, “Truly good works are done, not from our own natural powers, but when the person by faith is reconciled with God and renewed by the Holy Ghost...”

- What proof do you find in the biblical text that shows the sheep did not do these good works in order to be saved, but did good works because they were saved?