SERMON FOR SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2026

The Politics of a Love beyond Dualism

Seven-year-old Linus van Pelt, in Charles Schulz's cartoon "Peanuts", watches television; his big sister Lucy comes upon him and says, "I don't want to watch that program. I want to watch MY program." Linus wants to be left alone and says, "Alright, I'll go upstairs and listen to some of my music." Lucy follows him. As Linus sits down near the radio, she growls, "I don't want to listen to that music; I want to listen to MY music." Linus stares at her and sighs, "Fine, I'll go to the next room and play a few records." Lucy is right behind and yells, "I don't want to listen to those records. I want to listen to MY records." Exasperated, Linus turns toward the door and announces, "OK, I'll go outside and look at the stars for a while."
Once again, Lucy follows him and shouts, "I don't want to look at those stars. I want to look at MY ..." This is when she stops, glares at her little brother, sighs loudly and walks away… Lucy is like a fish out of water. Had she finished her sentence—"I want to look at MY stars"—she would have looked foolish.

The "Peanuts" vignette illustrates two kinds of faith. Lucy's is a small faith, which essentially says, "I believe in me and nothing else." Linus' faith is wider and more mature, as he points his big sister toward the stars which neither he nor she can ever call their own.

Likewise, the Gospel assigned for Christ the King Sunday talks of two sorts of faith from which people operate as they live in the world. It is the story from Matthew 25, often referred to as "The Last Judgment".

At first glance, it is unclear how this passage can rightly be called Good News (Gospel). There are no deliberations in this court, no dialogue, no chance to make one's case; the decision already has been made. The point that the harsh kingly role does not seem to fit the image of Jesus as a preacher of forgiveness, peace and joy has not stopped the church from using our text to frighten people with hellfire and eternal punishment.

One way or another, it makes people angry when someone does not believe in hell. What is going on? This seems to be a good time to speak of *non-dualism*, a concept that, although present throughout Scripture, has been an open secret kept alive by the mystics of all times. Teaching that the Way of God is found by becoming one with everything, mystics point out that the binary (either/or) approach with which we

organize our day-to-day lives won't work for accessing our spiritual lives. They say that any sense of "other" will prove to be an illusion once we acknowledge that all creation is one; that realization is what they call *"not two"*—non-dualism. The parables of Jesus were designed to stymie our rational minds, so that we might hear the voice of our hearts.

People with a 'Linus' sort of faith are open and listen to their hearts; their spirituality is mystical and non-dual. People with a 'Lucy' sort of faith are fearful and trust only their minds; their spirituality is ego-driven and dualistic.

Jesus begins his story in the dualistic view, both in the sheep/goat image and in the overall framework of his speech. Once he has shocked his listeners out of their self-righteousness, he switches to a non-dual mode, and encourages universal compassion: "*... just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."* (verse 40), connecting what we do for others with what we do for him. In relating his wake-up call to his own life, he breaks up his audience's dualism; in the end, he suggests, there is only one valid answer left: love.

Within Matthew's gospel, our text is Jesus' last speech before the Passion Story begins—the story in which he becomes one of the despised goats, a scapegoat. And in the Scripture passage Jesus indicates that he is approaching the cross to deal with the judgment: *"'Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out.' ... He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die"* (John 12:31.33). Seen from this angle, being preoccupied with judgment is not necessary; thus, our story indeed is "Gospel", Good News.

Our love toward "the least of these" addresses God's own needs. To properly love God is to love everyone in God's creation. What ultimately counts is not what we believe about God but what we do for God's sisters and brothers. It is time to roll up our sleeves. There are sisters and brothers all around us, and they need our compassionate action.

Where love is inhibited, spiritual death soon follows. Where love flourishes, the Good News of God is alive: strangers are welcomed, enemies are loved, the hungry are fed, the sick are healed, the Good News reaches those in captivity.

The lesson of this powerful Gospel text is not fear, but love.

If we conform our lives to the world around us, we will fail; but if we boldly embody the life of Christ, we will begin to love all creation as one, as God does. As a

community committed to not leaving anyone behind, the people of God are "at cross-purposes" (in more ways than one) with our current fear-based official culture, which continuously and relentlessly concocts new ways of labeling whole groups of people as enemies.

We are contending with agents of "vicious power" whenever we step up to find justice for those pushed to the margins, but even though "in testing's hour" we will be tempted to retreat, Jesus leads us forward: he bids us see his face in the face of each person who is being labeled, harassed, excluded, insulted, hurt, or deported. Those with a 'Lucy-faith' are too fearful to do this, but those with a 'Linus-faith' are ready.

Love is the lesson. Love is all that counts. Love is all that lasts. Amen.