

*Christ the King Sunday*

*November 22, 2020*

(If you are home read the prayers and scripture readings and recite the Creed aloud, even if you are by yourself, in order to hear with the ears each one. Sing or read the final hymn aloud. If you are worshiping in person, please follow along silently.)

**Prepare for worship:** Sit in silence or with soft music for a few moments

**Call to Worship:** *Shepherd Me, O God*  
Shepherd me, O God  
beyond my wants,  
beyond my fears,  
from death into life.

From *The Faith We Sing* Copyright 2000, Abingdon Press, 2058

**Centering Words:**

When we care for the poor, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and imprisoned, we are caring for Christ. When we love our neighbor, we are really loving God.

From *The Abingdon Worship Annual 2020* Copyright 2019 by Abingdon Press. Used by permission.

**Prayer of the Day:**

Almighty God, who gave your Son Jesus Christ a realm where all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; make us loyal followers of our living Lord, that we may always hear his word, follow his teachings, and live in his Spirit; and hasten the day when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord; to your eternal glory. In the name of Christ our King who taught us to pray.

From *The United Methodist Book of Worship* Copyright 1992 The United Methodist Publishing House.

**The Lord's Prayer:**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

**Affirmation of Faith:** Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

**Prayer of Illumination:**

Open our ears that we may hear and our hearts and minds that we may receive your word O Lord our rock and redeemer.

(After each reading take two to three minutes to reflect upon the meaning of the passage to you today.)

Epistle Reading            Ephesians 1: 15-23

Psalm 100

Gospel Reading            Matthew 25: 31-46

Special Music

Old Testament Reading Ezekiel 34: 11-16, 20-24

Sermon                    *We Have a King*

Hymn: *Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us*

1. Savior, like a shepherd lead us,  
much we need thy tender care;  
in thy pleasant pastures feed us,  
for our use thy folds prepare.  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
Thou hast bought us, thine we are.  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
Thou hast bought us, thine we are.
2. We are thine, thou dost befriend us,  
be the guardian of our way;  
keep thy flock, from sin defend us,  
seek us when we go astray.  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
Hear, O hear us when we pray.  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
Hear, O hear us when we pray.
3. Thou hast promised to receive us,  
poor and sinful though we be;  
thou hast mercy to relieve us,  
grace to cleanse and power to free.  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
We will early turn to thee.  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
We will early turn to thee.
4. Early let us seek thy favor,  
early let us do thy will;  
blessed Lord and only Savior,  
with thy love our bosoms fill.  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
Thou hast loved us, love us still.  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
Thou hast loved us, love us still.

From *The United Methodist Hymnal* Copyright 1989 The United Methodist Publishing House, 381

**Benediction:**

Let us go forth to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned; showing that we love our King, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

**Response:**        *God Be with You till We Meet Again*  
God be with you till we meet again;  
by his counsels guide, uphold you,  
with his sheep securely fold you;  
God be with you till we meet again.

From *The United Methodist Hymnal* Copyright 1989 The United Methodist Publishing House, 673

We Have a King

11/22/2020

Ezekiel 34: 11-16, 20-24

Christ the King Sunday

We don't particularly like kings, do we? Our country began in revolt against a king some 244 years ago. We proclaimed ourselves a democracy. Our leaders would be elected by the people. We would not have a king for life and a continuing succession of rulers from one generation to the next.

Look at what happened in the Bible. Israel having a king was OK as long as it was David but after that it began to unravel. After the reign of Solomon the country divided into Israel and Judah. Israel, the Northern Kingdom, was conquered by the Assyrians after a long succession of "bad" kings. Judah had been conquered by the Babylonians even after a couple of "good" kings. Kings didn't seem to work well for the descendants of Abraham.

What made these kings bad? The economy? No. The reign of some of the worst kings, from the Biblical point of view, were times of economic prosperity and growth in Israel and Judah. Some military alliances may not have been the best but that was not really what made the kings "bad".

This brings us to the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel prophesied after the fall of Judah during the exile in Babylon. He uses the metaphor of the king, and possibly all the leaders of Judah, as shepherds. The metaphor of the king as a shepherd is a common motif in the Bible. David was a shepherd. Sometimes even God is portrayed as a shepherd, in Psalm 23 for example. So, when Ezekiel speaks of shepherds, he is referring to the kings and leaders of Judah who did not manage their flock, the people of Judah, well.

Earlier, in chapter 34, Ezekiel notes five things that the shepherds failed to do. These were things that any half decent shepherd would do for the flock. They did not strengthen the weak. The health of the flock is measured by the strength of its weakest members. A good shepherd would give the weak extra food or whatever was necessary to build up the strength of the weakest, for that also builds up the strength of the flock as a whole. These shepherds did not care for the weak, they only sought to strengthen themselves.

They did not heal the sick. A sick sheep does not produce the quality of wool or meat. It cannot be used for a sacrifice. A sick sheep can possibly infect the whole flock, completely wiping out the flock. A good shepherd cares for the sick sheep, nursing them back to health. These shepherds let the sick die.

They did not bind up the injured. Binding up a wound helps to keep the wound clean so it does not get infected. Also, it helps to close the tear in the skin so it heals quicker. Binding holds

broken bones in place so they may heal. A good shepherd takes care of the injured. These shepherds left the wounded.

They did not bring back those that had strayed. The strength of a flock of sheep is in its unity. When it is bunched tightly together a predator can not pick a single target, it just sees a mass of wool. A sheep that strays away from the flock is easy prey for a predator. A good shepherd brings those that stray from the flock back into the safety of the flock. These shepherds only cared for their own safety.

Finally, they did not search for the lost. They did not care that their sheep had gotten lost and scattered. They were gone and therefore out of sight, out of mind. These shepherds did not care that the people were divided and cast out of their homeland.

Because of the poor shepherding of these kings and leaders, the descendants of Abraham, God's chosen people, were defeated, destroyed and dispersed, which brings us to the passage we read today.

The descendants of Abraham, God's chosen people, were going to have a new king. This new king would search out the lost and bring back the strays. This new king would bring the people back together and unify them once more. This new king would bind up the injured, heal the sick and strengthen the weak. This new king would heal the wounds of the people. This new king would bring up and strengthen the weak. Therefore, this new king would strengthen the nation, the people.

Who is this new king? This new king is Yaweh. God will be the new king. God will rule the people. God will search out the lost. God will bring back the strays. God will bind up the wounded. God will heal the sick. God will strengthen the weak. God will rule the people Israel. No more earthly kings, God will rule God's people.

God will be the shepherd, who leads the flock to still waters and green pastures. God will shepherd the people into God's sheepfold, into God's kingdom.

As Christians we consider ourselves to be God's people. Therefore, as God's people we have a King. God is our King. God is the ruler of our lives. We strive to obey God in every aspect of our lives. We strive to please our King by submitting to the divine King's will.

In submitting to the divine King's will, we are to be God's hands and feet in the world. We are to seek out the lost. We are to be aware of those people in our community, and in our world, who are lost. We are to go out and bring the lost into God's kingdom.

We are to bring back the strays. We are to reach out to those who may have fallen away from the church. We are to continue to show them that they are loved, even if for some reason church is a painful place.

We are to bind up the wounded and heal the sick. This is not only healing of the body but also the mind and spirit. It is also binding and healing the wounds of our church, community, nation, and the world. We are to work for reconciliation and healing in our church, community, nation, and the world. We are to bring together the broken parts of ourselves, our church, our community, our nation and the world so those broken parts may come together and be fused as one.

We are to strengthen the weak. There is no survival of the fittest in God's kingdom. God created us all to be fit and whole. Therefore, we strive to break down barriers humans create that keep others from being as God created them. We reach down to our brothers and sisters who are deprived economically, socially, physically and spiritually to lift them up, giving them the strength to be as God created them.

We are basically to see the needs of those around us then work to meet those needs. This is the basis by which our king will judge us. This is the basis by which the King will determine if we have truly lived in the Kingdom. This is seen in our Gospel reading today.

We will not be judged on the basis of our stance on abortion, or homosexuality, or political persuasion, or climate change, or wearing a mask. We will be judged by whether or not we saw the needs around us and then worked in whatever way we could to meet those needs. This is the case for us as individuals and as a society. It is seeing the need locally in our own community and throughout the world.

We have a King. God is our King. Let us work for our King to seek the lost, bring in the strays, bind the wounds, heal the sick and strengthen the weak. Let us work to bring God's perfect kingdom on earth to fruition. Let us live with God as our King.