

November 26 2023: Reign of Christ Sunday

Main Idea: Inaction is as bad or worse than acting reprehensibly.

Jesus described the coming of the Son of Man. On that day, he will separate the sheep from the goats. At his right hand will sit all who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, took care of the sick, and visited the imprisoned. At his left hand will sit all who did not feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, and give the thirsty drink.

Interestingly, Jesus didn't say that those excluded from the kingdom were the bad people—those who acted reprehensibly. He did not condemn those who betrayed loved ones, murdered innocents, or stole from the poor. The bar was far lower for those excluded. They were not the ones that acted improperly, but the ones that did not act at all.

We live in a culture that values privacy and autonomy. There is no harm in moving through the world with a minimal footprint. We do our thing, we keep to ourselves, and no one gets hurt.

But Jesus expects more. It is not enough to feed our own families or to climb the corporate ladder for ourselves. Jesus expects us to feed other people and help others succeed. We are to welcome those who show up at our doorstep hungry and without homes. We are to offer a helping hand to those whose skin color, culture, age, size, sexuality, or gender identity prevents them from achieving equitably. We are to humble ourselves so that others might be lifted up. Failing to harm is not enough. Failing to act is in some ways worse. It is more insidious in how inaction is perceived as benign. Inaction is not benign—its harm is invasive and ugly and painful. We can do better.

Scripture Summary

Jesus tells of when he comes in glory at the end of time, and he makes it clear that until that time, we should see his face in the faces of all human beings everywhere, and thus treat them as we would him.



I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.

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GOD'S WORD for Today

First Reading: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

¹For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. ¹²As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. ¹⁴I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. ¹⁶I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice. ²⁰Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, ²²I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. ²³I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.

Psalm: Psalm 100

Second Reading: Ephesians 1:15-23

¹⁵I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among

the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²²And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46

³¹“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ ⁴¹Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ ⁴⁵Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”