

Christ The King – 22 November 2020

A Sermon by Shilo Varughese, Ordinand in Training

Matthew 25:31-46

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today we are celebrating the feast of Christ the King. Today is also the last Sunday of Ordinary time, before we begin a new liturgical year.

The liturgical year is divided into several seasons, as we begin next Sunday the season of Advent. Then it guides us to the celebration of Christmas, the feast of Epiphany, then we observe Lent and celebrate Easter; finally it leads us to Ordinary Time which resumes until the end of the liturgical year.

These seasons are intentionally designed by the Church to guide us to walk with Christ, allow us to remember his life, death and resurrection, to celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit and to recall the ministry of the holy people who have spread the Christian faith over the centuries.

Everything we observe and participate in during the liturgical year has been pointing to today, the day when we crown Jesus as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

We have just heard the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25 verses 31 to 46. This is one of the most vivid parables which Jesus ever spoke about the last judgement. In this parable Jesus called himself the Son of Man, a Shepherd and a King.

It is crystal clear Jesus told his disciples about his second coming as He said, 'When the Son of Man comes in glory, all the nations will gather together before the glorious throne'.

He said that he is going to separate the nations. Then He explained, how and why He is going to separate the nations.

According to this gospel, there are three events that are going to take place when Jesus returns. Firstly, the gathering together; secondly the separation; and thirdly the final judgement.

We are so comfortable to see Christ the King as a baby in a manger, we might be very happy to see him as a friend who walks with us in our joy, in our troubles, in our sorrows. We might wish to see him as a King, up to the way of the cross.

Beyond then, are we comfortable to see him? Are we ready to welcome Christ the King, as a judge?

God's incarnation and manifestation in Jesus revealed to us the Kingdom of God.

What kind of kingdom, does Christ the King reveal to us?

Jesus revealed a Kingdom which was central to him. That Kingdom revealed through Jesus was, that as the son he obeys his father and allows the Holy Spirit to direct him.

Christ the King came down to the earth with a mission, to build a Kingdom on earth as in heaven. So, he taught us to pray to his father, "Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven".

The Gospel clearly tells us, Jesus told his disciples he is going to come back in His glory to judge the nations. Christ the King said, on His return He will separate the nations from each other, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, He will place the sheep on His right and the goats on His left.

The righteous sheep on His right are going to enter into eternal life with Christ the King, and the goats on His left are going to be sent away into eternal punishment.

This message is not to make us panic or to scare us but to encourage us to take a step forward wittingly to stand on the right.

In the early waves of the corona virus pandemic, world leaders were criticized for failing to create a consistent international response to the corona virus pandemic. The critics believed, if there was a consistent international response at the right time, this would reduce the death rates and avoid spread of infection.

Consistent action based on sound advice is a wise step, for our salvation. Christ the King gave us a consistent warning about the last judgement and continues to remind us through His church.

The nature of this shepherd's love towards us is surely indispensable. We have seen that sacrificial love on the cross for our salvation.

None of us are created or born as a goat. We all are created or born as a sheep: Our good shepherd would like to see us leading a life as a sheep.
Our good shepherd would like to see us standing on the right.
Our good shepherd would like to call us all his blessed sheep.

At the same time the good shepherd has some expectations from his sheep. So, as a Church we are called to join with the mission of Christ the King to create the kingdom on earth as in heaven.

Christ the King is not expecting us to take his role as judge, to judge our fellows, rather He is expecting us to sustain our position on the right with His other sheep.

And if we are blessed to stand on the right, Christ the King expects us to extend that privileged blessing to others.

Let me take your attention back to today's gospel reading. Jesus used three phrases to describe himself in this parable, Son of man, a shepherd and the King.

Why did Jesus use these two phrases Son of Man and Shepherd at the beginning, instead of using the King the ruler or a judge especially when he spoke about the last judgement.

The first reason, through using the phrase 'Son of Man', Christ the King revealed his humanity to us, who is able to sympathize with all our weakness; He revealed a humanity which is relational, which is servant hearted, which is focused on others; humanity which is charismatic, able to attract, and influence those around him.

Through the second phrase 'Shepherd', Christ the King revealed his safeguarding nature which is sacrificial, which is centred on his love and care for all creations.

Christ the King who came down to the earth in human body shown us the nature of God. And He taught us to follow that nature of God to create God's Kingdom on earth as in heaven.

When Christ the King comes in his glory, we are told that he is going to separate the nations based on how we responded to human need, how we safeguard His creations.

The sheep on the right and the goats on the left will be judged by one criterion. And that criterion is, their attitude towards humanity.

The sheep and the goats have the same excuse to say to the King "Lord, when did we see you?" The reality is, we do not always recognize Jesus in the people we meet.

But we can always treat others with love, kindness and respect. So, Jesus said, "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".

As a member of God's family, let's encourage and enlighten one another to lead a life to hear the voice of our Lord, Christ the King, saying to each one of us: 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let's crown Christ the King in our hearts, today and always.

Amen.