



THE SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST THE KING

CYCLE A

Ezekiel 34: 11-12, 15 - 17
1 Corinthians 15: 20 - 26, 28
Matthew 25: 31 - 46

GATHERING

(An unlit candle and some seasonal flowers rest on a table covered with a white cloth.)

The church year comes to culmination this week with the feast that celebrates the final victory of God in Christ. Last week, we reflected on the meaningfulness of work in *making a life*. Name some task of daily life you did this past week that represents a real accomplishment. *(Members share briefly.)*

OPENING PRAYER

(The candle is lit. The leader calls the community to a time of silent acknowledgment of the presence of God. After at least two minutes of silence, members join in singing, "In You, O Lord". The song may be found on the Internet.)

Leader: Let us pray – that the kingdom of Christ may live in our hearts and come to our world. *(Pause)*

Father all-powerful, God of love,
you have raised our Lord Jesus Christ
from death to life,
resplendent in glory as King of creation.

Open our hearts,
free all the world to rejoice in his peace,
to glory in his justice, to live in his love.

Bring all mankind together in
Jesus Christ your Son,
whose kingdom is with you and the Holy Spirit,
One God, forever and ever.

All: Amen.

Christ the King: Alternative Opening Prayer, **The Sacramentary**.

Focus Question

How strong an individual do you consider yourself to be?

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the gospel reading, the facilitator invites members to mention a word, a phrase or an image from one of the readings that particularly struck them this week. Members then read over the commentary and consider the questions in silence for several minutes before entering into conversation.)

Commentary

Years ago, the theologian, Paul Tillich, sought to focus the religious dimension for the *modern world* in terms of “ultimate concern”. Ezekiel, Paul and Jesus are a bit more direct. For them, it is a simple matter: God Rules! In a world where *the individual* seems to be the measure of all things, the simplicity and directness of the biblical witness stands as a sharp counterpoint.

This gospel from Matthew is the only place where Jesus is heard to associate the title of king to himself. But this king does not stand alone. His reign is in

relationship to his father to whom the kingdom is to be turned over. When all is subjected to him, says Paul, “the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all.”

Subjection: this is not an *in* word in this world of ours. But God’s reign is not about simple domination. God’s reign is all about relationship. Ezekiel’s shepherd/flock metaphor is not about God herding us like dumb animals. It is about God’s irrevocable commitment to his people. And as members of “his flock”, we all stand in relationship to one another.

Jesus’ own use of sheep imagery develops the implications of this relationship. The scene before “his glorious throne” is sharply portrayed. Jesus’ staccato rehearsal in a first, positive, then negative pattern of repetition underscores the fact and the importance of the very broad and deep relatedness of our lives.

Jesus’ qualifications for our inheriting the kingdom are rooted in more than simple humanitarianism. Faith is not discounted as a qualification for living the kingdom life. The solidarity into which he calls us with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the ill and the imprisoned is rooted in his relationship with them. Being with Jesus means being where Jesus is.

For the “sleek and strong” individual, Jesus’ message is uncomfortable. For someone living a self-absorbed life, Jesus’ message is even repugnant. If there is a call to social action here, it is not about do-goodism. It is about living deeply out of our fundamental relatedness as human beings “so that God may be all in all”. This says Jesus is the “ultimate concern”. God Rules!

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ How does the word, phrase or image that struck you from this week’s readings speak to your life or the life of the community, your family or our world today.
- ◆ How strongly is your sense of relationship with God connected to your sense of your relationship with others?
- ◆ How relational a person are you?
- ◆ How does preoccupation with personal concerns take away from your relationships with others?

All: The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Leader: Beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.

All: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Leader: You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

All: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Leader: Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for years to come.

All: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Psalm 23: 1-2, 2-3, 5-6

(The leader invites prayers of praise, thanksgiving and petition. To each prayer, members respond, "May your kingdom live in our hearts and come to our world, O Lord." The session concludes with the leader or member of the community offering some words of prayer on behalf of all. Members exchange a sign of peace.)