

# Christ the King

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## Christ the King November 24, 2002

The address for Year B is: <http://sio.midco.net/danelson9/yearb/index.htm> . This will provide an index to the studies for Year B.

### Prayer of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things to your beloved Son, whom you anointed priest forever and king of all creation: Grant that all the people of the earth, now divided by the power of sin, may be united under the glorious and gentle rule of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

### Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

{11} For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. {12} As 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. {13} I 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. {14} I 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. {15} I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. {16} I 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.... {20} Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. {21} Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, {22} I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. {23} I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. {24} And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

[1-10: An oracle against the "shepherds of Israel," the rulers, who have sought their own welfare at the expense of the people.] [1]

11-15: "Yahweh himself will care for his flock. In this motivation ([*ki*] "for") it becomes quite clear that the real intention of the shepherd-oracle, by contrast with the originally independent oracle in Jer 23:1f, is no longer an actual polemic against specific shepherds of Israel who are still active. The catastrophe is already in the past, and the prophet wishes to speak now of the new thing that Yahweh will do for his people." [2]

16. "The oracle has then been linked with vv 17-23 by the transitional addition in v 16." [3]

[17-19] 20-22: If the subject matter of vv 1-15 was the opposition of shepherds and flock, in vv 17-22 the topics are that of brutality within the flock when the strong animal displaces the weak and that of the protection exercised by the shepherd who sees that justice prevails. Thus his protection here is subsumed under the key-word "judge ([*shaphat*])." [4]

23-24: "Yahweh's act of deliverance leads, in vv 23f, to the promise of a good earthly shepherd." *my servant David shall be prince among them*: "...a reference to the fidelity of Yahweh, who will not go back on his initial promise about the house of David." [5] See also the use of a similar phrase in 37:25.

## Psalm 95:1-7a

{1} O come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! {2} Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! {3} For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. {4} In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. {5} The sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land, which his hands have formed. {6} O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! {7} For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

*1-7a:* These verses are "a hymn celebrating God's kingship...." [6]

*rock of our salvation:* "...a title of honor for Yahweh (cf. Also Ps. 80:26), which recalls the saving, sacred rock...." [7] "...the term...[*tsur*, "rock"]...alludes to an important sacral tradition of Jerusalem. With the sacred rock of the Jerusalem temple mount there are associated in the cultic tradition of Zion cosmic conceptions of the foundation of the world that is solidly grounded and lifted up on high.... These traditions (very likely originating in pre-Israelite times) have been applied to Yahweh. Yahweh himself is the "eternal rock" (Pss 31:3; 42:9). To him...all those who are in distress and danger flee for refuge." [8] Mitchell Dahood, pointing to the reference to Massah and Meribah where Moses struck water from the rock, comments "A probable allusion to the rock that yielded water in the desert, according to Exod xvii 1ff.." [9] It is not unlikely that the metaphor could have both rocks in mind.

*3. a great King above all gods:* Although there was a King in Judah, Yahweh was truly King of kings.

*7. we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand:* This is the image that connects the Psalm to the first lesson with its promise that Yahweh, himself, will be their shepherd.

## Ephesians 1:15-23

{15} I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason {16} I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. {17} I 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, {18} so 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, {19} and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. {20} God 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, {21} far 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. {22} And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, {23} which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

*20-23:* The imagery used to illustrate the resurrection and ascension of Jesus is taken from the language of kingship. God has placed him at his own right hand, above all other authorities, and has put everything under his feet. Then the metaphor changes: Jesus is the head of the church which is his body.

## Matthew 25:32-46

{32} All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, {33} and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. {34} Then 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; {35} for 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, {36} I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' {37} Then 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? {38} And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? {39} And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' {40} And 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.' {41} Then 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; {42} for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, {43} I 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.' {44} Then 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?' {45} Then 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.' {46} And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

31. *When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him:* Cf. Matthew 13:49: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him...." The angels will make the separation and send each group off to its reward.

*then he will sit on the throne of his glory:* Kings sit on thrones. The Son of Man is King. The king is Lord (verse 37).

35-36. *hungry...thirsty...stranger...naked...sick...in prison:* These are all "outsider" categories. The members of the king's family are outsiders, in terms of survival, religion, poverty, health, government

35. *stranger:* Being a stranger was not only a social category in Israel, but also a religious and cultural one. All but Israelites are strangers. Within Matthew's Christian Jewish community, all but Christian Jews (Gentiles and even Christian Gentiles) are strangers.

40. *And the king will answer them:* The eschatological judge is specifically identified as "the king."

*members of my family:* Literally, "my brothers." It is important to remember what Jesus said about the havoc he would cause in families in Matthew 10:34-47. The family would disintegrate over loyalty to Jesus. A new family would form around him: the hungry, thirsty, strangers, the naked, sick, and imprisoned. Those who are not, and those who do not serve them will "go away into eternal punishment."

## Reflection

There are royal images in all of the lessons: In Ezekiel the reference is to David who will be prince among God's people. Psalm 95 explicitly identifies Yahweh as a great King. In Ephesians the heavenly Jesus is spoken of in kingly metaphors, and in the Gospel, the Son of Man is identified as a king.

Some people feel discomfort with what is perceived as an elitist celebration of a festival dedicated to "Christ the King." They feel it is difficult to see how a celebration of the power and glory of royalty can be reconciled with the theology of the Cross. Like everything else about Jesus, however, his "kingdom is not from this world" (John 18:36).

If Jesus ever spoke the words recorded in Matthew 25, or any words remotely like them, and I believe he did; if anyone ever thought he said them, and by the end of the first century those who read the Gospel of Matthew thought he did, then what he was saying has been said in our times by Eugene Debs: "While there is a lower class I am in it, while there is a criminal element I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free." Jesus is *our* Lord and we shall have no alternative but to become slaves to those whom Jesus calls "members of my family." We serve our Lord and emulate his example. By becoming like him we become like them.

To use one's resources for the well-being of one's extended family was a *mitzvah*, an act of charity. Such acts are not done out of a feeling of benevolence, but from a sense of responsibility and duty. To be a follower of Jesus carries with it the responsibility to live as Jesus lived. To live as Jesus lived is not an act that will get us into the kingdom, it is the act of one who is kingdom bound.

What place is there in God's kingdom for those who will not provide for the needy, the helpless, the offensive, the guilty out of their resources? For those who have found security in the resources with which they have been blessed the judgment is unequivocal. They are accursed, consigned to eternal fire and eternal punishment. Yet, even for these, there is hope.

*With One Voice* (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement 1991* (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).  
E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

265 E--Christ, Whose Glory  
321 D--The Day Is  
402 I--Look From Your  
245 P--All People That  
424 G--Lord of Glory,  
425 G--O God of Mercy

425 G--O God of Mercy  
765v G--Jesus, Jesu (803s)  
766v G--We Come to the  
835s, 322, 386, 171, 631v,  
740v/740s, 744v, 801v/771s

### **Prayers of the People [11]**

P or A: Knowing our God as the Shepherd King we turn to prayer for our own needs and those of all people saying, "Shepherd us, God," and responding, "from death to life."

A: You have gathered us into a people to call your own. May our leaders who shepherd in your name, bishops, pastors, and lay ministers and leaders, be gifted with your wisdom and justice. May they be persons after your own heart and the heart of your people. Shepherd us, God, from death to life.

A: The nations long to be guided in the paths of righteousness. Give politicians and civil servants renewed vision and energy for their work of preparing and implementing policies for the welfare of all citizens give us ways to do more with less and not to exhaust our resources and imagination. Shepherd us, God, from death to life.

A: You have charged us with the care of the hungry, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the prisoner. Show us the blessing in showing this care. Open our eyes to see you in those without any other hope. Shepherd us, God, from death to life.

A: We ask that the sick and the dying remember the glorious hope to which we are called, the glorious inheritance among the saints. Comfort and heal according to your great wisdom and mercy. Remember those who have asked our prayers \_\_\_\_\_. Shepherd us, God, from death to life.

A: Prepare us for the day when the Son of Man comes in glory with all his angels. May we be ready to welcome him, our lamps burning, our lights shining. Prepare our hearts and minds for the day when we shall meet our God, trusting in the amazing grace we have received. Shepherd us, God, from death to life.

P: God is good and God's mercy is everlasting. In that sure and certain knowledge we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray to that eternal mercy, through Jesus Christ who reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen.

### **Or [12]**

*Presider or deacon*

Let us pray to the Lord our God, who seeks the lost sheep, binds up the injured, and strengthens the weak.

*Deacon or other leader*

For N our bishop and N our presbyter, for this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

For the leaders of the nations and all in authority, and for mercy, justice, and peace among all peoples.

For good weather, abundant fruits of the earth, and peaceful times.

For our city and those who live in it, and for our families, companions, and all those we love.

For all those in danger and need: the hungry and the thirsty, strangers and the naked, the sick and those in prison.

For those who rest in Christ and for all the dead.

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.

Lifting our voices with all creation, with the blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

*Presider*

God our shepherd, who raised your Son from the dead and made him king of all creation, hear the prayers we offer this day and enable us to see your glory in the face of the poor, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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## **Notes**

[1] Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2 A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983, p. 216.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 217.

[3] *Loc. cit.*

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 218.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 219.

[6] Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II: 51-100. Introduction, Translation and Notes*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., p.353.

[7] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989, p. 246.

[8] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989, p. 259.

[9] Dahood, *Loc. cit.*

[10] <http://www.worship.ca/text/wpch0102.txt>

[11] [http://www.worship.ca/text/int\\_a2.txt](http://www.worship.ca/text/int_a2.txt)

[12] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>