



# *The Feast of Christ the King*

## *Sermon by Ven Moses Thabethe*



Sunday 22 November 2020

### READINGS

Ezekiel 34: 11-16, 20-24; Psalm 100; Ephesians 1: 15-23; Matt 25: 31-46

## *The reign of Christ*

This Sunday many congregations around the world celebrate the feast of Christ the King or the Reign of Christ. This is a relatively recent addition to the liturgical calendar. This particular festival was established by Pope Pius XI in 1925, and moved from the last Sunday of October to its present location on the last Sunday of Ordinary Time by Pope Paul VI in 1969. Now you may wonder why it is that a Church so steeped in tradition would wait for such a long time before it would celebrate the Kingship of Christ – because ultimately that’s what we should proclaim every day of our lives, as we sing, as we worship, as we witness and as we serve our fellow citizens.

In our Parish, today at our worship service in Church, we will be admitting baptized children to Holy Communion as we also this day as a celebration of Thanksgiving or Harvest

In our readings today, as we celebrate the Kingship or Reign of Christ, we quickly realize that he is not a power - hungry king or ruler: In the reading from Ezekiel we learn that God always takes the initiative in restoring the lost and broken. However, the Apostle Paul says that those who have profited at others’ expense will face the consequences of their injustice. Jesus’ parable of the “sheep and the goats” continues the theme of God’s indiscriminate love and compassion. When we care for the vulnerable, we are indirectly caring for God. God feels the pain of the vulnerable but God also feels their joy when they are restored to wholeness. Accordingly, we love the Creator by loving the creatures. There is no contradiction between loving God and loving the world. If we love all things in God, we will love in helpful and healthy ways.

Matthew 25 challenges us to live a life that is centered on God and our fellow human beings. Our love for others should draw us towards love of God and greater understanding of how God deals graciously and mercifully with all of humanity!

Leo Tolstoy, inspired by the Parable of the sheep and the goats, wrote a story called “Where Love is, God is.” It was adapted into a play called “Martin the Cobbler” – a cobbler being a person who makes and repairs shoes. Martin was old and each day, he worked very hard, repairing shoes in a basement shop. Through its window he could see the legs of every one passing by. He could even tell who it was by their shoes, most of which he had repaired or made at some time or other. Martin was a loner and a little

reclusive as he had lost his wife and child. One day, a friend of his gave him a copy of the New Testament and that changed his life forever!

One night Martin has a dream in which the Lord tells him that the next day he would visit him. So all day he keeps looking expectantly out the window when he hears someone approaching. But all he sees are the usual passers by: someone sweeping the pavement suffering from the cold weather;; an old woman shouting at a boy a boy for trying to steal her apple on the side of the road; a young mother dressed in thin clothes, carrying a hungry baby and so on.. Martin helps each of them; but at the end of the day he was disappointed that the Lord did not show up as he had promised. Then as Martin read this passage from Matthew 25, he comes across those words:

*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? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' 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.'*** Then Martin's eyes were opened and he began to understand the meaning of the words of Jesus in the parable.

These sayings of Jesus in the parables, we don't obey them in order to earn favour with God. We don't love God or neighbour or share the gospel so that we can stand before the throne on Judgment Day and say, "See what I did!"

We love because God first loved us. We love because that's the expression of a transformed life – recognizing that we live by the grace of God.

The love that we show is not some big miracle or publicly impressive example of profound love. Jesus talks about the little things, the little acts of reaching out, providing food and drink, clothing and being hospitable – these are basic human needs. Accompanying the lonely or those who are in confinement – these are demonstrations of our commitment to Christ, however mundane or simple. These ministries are within the reach of every one of us. We can do this. And yet, these ministries are given the highest honours by Jesus. This small list is provided here to remind us that every person we meet is dying for a drop of love.

A greater and a more challenging call of this parable is for us to go beyond the simple acts of charity and to start asking the question "why?" Why the hunger, why the homelessness, why the oppression of one group by another, we would then be moved to ask questions about justice. Shane Claiborne, Christian activist and author is quoted saying, "Things get messy when people begin moving beyond charity and toward justice and solidarity with the poor and oppressed. Once we are actually friends with the folks in struggle, we start to ask why people are poor, which is never as popular as giving to charity" (Live Just.ly, p. 80).

Love is what this is about. Love is all that counts. Love is what will endure. Amen