

Sunday, November 26, 2017

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

Ephesians 1:15-23

Matthew 25:31-46

### Sharing Jesus' Story

Today is Reign of Christ Sunday when we lift up Jesus as the King of all kings, Lord of all Lords, the beginning and the end Alpha and Omega all because he died and rose to new life for all of us. It is one of those in between worship days—when we look at these last weeks which focused on Serving God with faith and hope as the people of Israel wandered through the desert to the Promised Land to and we look forward to the days of Advent with our focus on the Peaceable kingdom from Isaiah's prophecy made possible through Jesus' birth. How do we understand this in between day looking at Jesus as King, as Shepherd, Master and Judge? It is a day to be reminded that Jesus will one day look at each of us and judge us much like the shepherd sorts the sheep and goats. We will be judged by Christ for what we have done and will continue to do in this world but we need not be afraid because we can share our story because we know Jesus' story. We can tell Jesus' story with love and conviction and faith because to serve Jesus and be called Christian is foundational to our faith commitment.

Jesus rarely spoke about the final judgment, but on one occasion he described a scenario of what will take place. He states that the Son of Man will come and sit on his throne and the angels will be all around him. Everyone will be gathered before him and they will then be separated just like a shepherd who separates sheep from goats. Sheep to the right and goats to the left. To the sheep-like people he will say- Come and take your inheritance- you will receive the kingdom I prepared for you because of what you have done for others- the least of the brothers and sisters of mine. That is because you helped the hungry and thirsty, the stranger and those needing clothes, you also helped the sick and visited those in prison and by doing this you lived in the way of Jesus.

To those on his left, Jesus said you didn't do what you were supposed to do and so now you will go into eternal punishment. On that Day of Judgment there will be a great division. The great surprise is that those who thought they were doing faith-filled actions turn out to be not as good as they thought, and those who thought they failed were told they did a better job than they supposed. Those who are to go into eternal punishment as our BBC group has learned is what has been called hell on earth or hell in one's mind based upon choices one has made in life. We also discussed about who those who needed the help and whether and how they too

will be judged. So we need to consider what constitutes faithful actions. Helping a stranger, those in need, those who are hurting: these are acts of compassion and definitely doing what Jesus has called us to do. But consider the good that you do not do. That is, what you choose not to get involved with; what you choose not to acknowledge or share of yourself. These too are important as we strive to meet the needs of others.

Let us consider this story of a hungry man who was walking down the street in a village of medieval Turkey. He had only a piece of bread in his hand. He came to a restaurant where some meatballs were being grilled. The cooking meat was so near and the smell so delicious the man held his piece of bread over the meat to capture some of the smell. As he started to eat the bread, the angry restaurant owner seized him and took him away to see a judge.

The owner protested, "This man was stealing the smell of my meat without asking permission. I want you to make him pay me for it." The judge thought for a moment, then held up his purse in front of the owner and shook it. "What are you doing that for?" asked the restaurant owner? The judge replied, "I am paying you. The sound of money is fair payment for the smell of food."

Just what is the challenge when we are dealing with the least and the last? Is it to make sure that what we are sharing with them is real? That is, when we care we must make sure that our care is expressed in ways that are tangible and begins to change lives. When we consider those less fortunate than ourselves, are we being true to ourselves, our faith and our love of Jesus who before his arrest and trial knelt down as a servant and washed the feet of his disciples? Are we being faithful when it is so easy to write a cheque for a cause that seems important yet is so far removed from oneself that we question whether it is worthwhile? Are we doing good for the sake of being good people and is this real?

The American holiday influences are impacting Canada—from Green Wednesday to last Thursday as Thanksgiving Day (or Red Thursday by some Canadian advertisers), to Black Friday, Cyber Monday and now Giving Tuesday we have many decisions before us all. Just where will the 'holiday budget' be spent and who will benefit? What does it mean to give? Will the sound of money be fair payment for the smell of food and water and clothing that is needed?

Jesus' parable of the separation of sheep and goats enables us to imagine the shepherd as the livestock comes forward. He looks at each animal as it walks by; looks at their eyes, heads, bodies and directs them appropriately. When we consider doing something for one of the least of our brothers and sisters do we view the other person as if they are Christ who has

humbled himself before us? Or do we just do something appears as good enough. We know that people have problems that go much deeper than food and water or clothes, sometimes there are illnesses, poor choices made in the past which result in situations that cannot be easily changed. But what do we do? What can we do? We can be humble and kind and show compassion. We can listen and learn about their lives. And we can tell them about the story of Jesus and the depth of his love for them including his death and resurrection. But are we willing to do this?

I've heard many people say I am on a limited budget and even though I want to do more financially, I just cannot. We know this to be true of many people and so we need to think positively about what we can do and realize that others will do what you cannot. We will be judged by the good we do not do and we will be held accountable that what we can accomplish is filled with hope in God's Spirit. But are we willing to risk this and do good anyway? Are you willing to be like Christ and serve him in faith?

Many Christians often respond I wish days were longer to do more to help others. When you reach out to others, make it real- by doing so with a heart like Christ- with care and love knowing that at some point in your life, someone told you about Jesus, too. This is what sharing Jesus' story is about and on this Reign of Christ Sunday we can rejoice that we know the story of love given to us by God and how Jesus reigns with the Father as the Spirit guides us to do good things in His name. Jesus' story is of hope, love, joy and peace let us hold on to this as we prepare to welcome Him again into our lives. Thanks be to God.

Let us pray.

Jesus you are our King and Saviour, our teacher. Shepherd and friend, hold us while we learn from you what it means to love you and know your story of hope. Enable us to be real as we meet others where they are= in need and in need of hope. Reveal yourself to us in those who seek you and enable us to share our faith story with all whom we meet. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.