

Last Sunday in the Church Year (2017)

Matthew 25:31–46 [Jesus said:] “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. **34 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who 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 drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’** 37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ 40 And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, 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 no drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ 44 Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ 45 Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, 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.”

In the Name of Jesus.

The ‘blessed of David’s Father’ are indeed sheep! But they are also ‘fearless!’ First John contains the only other usage of the word for the goats’ ‘destruction’ or ‘punishment.’ ‘Fear contains this destruction/punishment.’ From which the sheep have ALREADY been freed!

Dear sheep of the Good Shepherd, you are the blessed

of the Father because Jesus of Nazareth is your Shepherd, your King, your NEW David, the Anointed of the Living God, the Christ! To YOU has come His Baptism and His Gospel, which He sent out by the Eleven to all the nations. You are the Sheep of the Good Shepherd, disciples, little children: ALL terms of endearment with your God, for those who are lost and fearful without HIM coming ALL...THE...WAY to US!

But He has! And so, no fear. Not of God; nor of any MAN! Just after these teachings, the goats of Israel gathered, Saint Matthew records, to do away with OUR King. Why?

Why, dear sheep of the Good Shepherd? You tell me! One word! WHY could the goats of Israel no more live under THIS Christ, THIS David, THIS God-in-our-flesh, no more than the Old Adam in US can stand to live under Him?!

WHY must they shepherd Jesus to the cross? One word! FEAR!

To live under Jesus in HIS Kingdom includes giving up everything the goats hold most dear! Their 'MINISTRY!' That's the FIRST WORD that leaps to their goat-y lips, when confronted with the shock of rebuke:

‘MINISTRY!’ ‘WHEN, O Lord, did we NOT MINISTER to you! THAT is what we were all about! Religion! Good deeds! Making as much noise and fuss and causing as much trouble in this world that every last man was WOWED by our neuroses! And so, surely, heaven was too?!’

‘Depart from me, you cursed, to the fire prepared for teachers and preachers like you, angels, and your master, the devil! For the one time YOU were blessed with one of MY SHEEP to care for, pardon, soothe, and lift up to faith and hope and love, you looked for God somewhere else!’

The fearlessness of the sheep is summed up in the petition of the Lord’s Prayer: ‘Watch US, dear Father! IN EXACTLY the same way WE pardon those who break your Law over OUR HEADS, THAT is the manner in which we INSIST that you pardon US, for all the ways we smash the tablets over the your head, and the heads of those around us!’

Dear sheep of the Good Shepherd: if you are not ALREADY in the ‘kingdom prepared for you by My Father from the foundation of the world,’ you will never GET THERE! But you ARE already in that Kingdom! For your Christ, your David, your King, has put the words of THAT PRAYER into your lips, COMMANDED y’all to pray them, AND...has promised that HIS Father, Who put Him

in office as King, is only happy when YOU pray to Him with those words!’

So:

When you find that YOUR light of the Gospel is the palest reflection of the Sun that is Christ, DO...NOT...FEAR! You are not ON PROBATION! You are in HIS Kingdom! MEANING: He is NOT going to treat you according to what YOU DO! Instead, He is going to treat you as one of the ‘least of these My brothers,’ who have the hardest time getting in line with the Good News of pardon in Christ! Much less in line with the hard stone of the Law!

When you end up in a family, a church, a job, a neighborhood, a country, and so on, where the next person needs MOST OF ALL from you pardon, overlooking failings, understanding, patience—ESPECIALLY when you CONCLUDE that they don’t seem to be trying all that hard to please you OR God!—the default conclusion of the Gospel is that you may very well have a little one of Jesus Christ there, a subject of His Kingdom, a sheep of the Everlasting Shepherd. And if they basically seem to need nothing but a ‘pass,’ forgetfulness-forgiving and a fresh start every time you see them—then it’s for CERTAIN! THAT is the little one that The Father Unseen calls ‘blessed!’

Do not fear, dear sheep of the Good Shepherd! When Christ appears this morning—at the latest, by MY calculations!—you have NOTHING...TO...FEAR! For your future is ALREADY sealed! NOTHING different is going to happen when Jesus appears than is ALREADY GOING ON in His Church! If He needs to feed you NOW with His Body and His Blood, STUFF you with the record and pledge of Heaven's grace and favor on those who CANNOT deserve God, then He's not going to mangle His Kingdom into something OLD, something different from the New Testament in His Blood!

You have been baptized at His authority. Meaning, HE calls you clean, HEAVEN sees no defect in you, THE HOLY SPIRIT is not at ALL upset that He must pass over basically everything you do, or that He must take our prayers and re-formulate them to make them acceptable to the Father. Baptized at the authority of your crucified and risen King, the Father ONLY deems us 'blessed,' when WE have NO CONTROL over standing with HIM, and are utterly SUBJECT to the Reign of Pardon HIS David, HIS Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, has begun!

And One Day—soon!—even HE, our King, will hand over the Kingdom to His Father and—WITH...US...-- AS...ONE...OF...US...FOREVER—Christ will walk among us as our Shepherd, and we will never go astray

from our God again, as long as He lives with Those
Wounds, and our entire faith rests in the Name of Jesus!
Amen!