

Last Sunday of the Church Year – 2023  
Saturday, 11/25 at 4:00 | Sunday, 11/26 at 9:00

**Each year we come to the END OF THE CHURCH YEAR, *which reminds us about the END OF THE WORLD and the RETURN OF JESUS!* As repentant believers, *let us be thankful that we are forgiven, at peace, and ready!***

Text: NAS 1995

**Introduction:** Dear friends in Christ, on this last Sunday of the church year, we focus on the three assigned readings.

**OLD TESTAMENT: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24 NAS-95**

God the Father had mercy on His sheep and looked ahead to the sending of the Good Shepherd, the Messiah!

<sup>11</sup> For thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. <sup>12</sup> As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day.”

<sup>13</sup> “I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land. <sup>14</sup> I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. <sup>15</sup> I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest,” declares the Lord GOD. <sup>16</sup> “I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment.”

<sup>20</sup> Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them, “Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat sheep [those who are self-righteous, self-sufficient, and unrepentant] and the lean sheep [those who are humble, sorry for their sins, and trusting in the coming Messiah].”

<sup>21</sup> “Because you [the fat sheep] push with side and with shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns until you have scattered them abroad, <sup>22</sup> therefore, I will deliver My flock, and they will no longer be a prey; and I will judge between one sheep and another.”

<sup>23</sup> “Then I [God the Father] will set over them one shepherd, My servant David [that is, the great descendant of David, the Son of God, the Promised Messiah], and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. <sup>24</sup> And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David [that is, the coming Savior] will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken.

L: The Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God!**

**A Summary Statement from The Lutheran Study Bible: 34:11–24** “In place of unfaithful shepherds, God will provide one Shepherd, Jesus Christ (“My servant David”; v 24).

...Matthew captures King David’s ancestry and how it culminates in Jesus Christ as Savior (Mt 1:6b–16). Jesus is the Good Shepherd who faithfully provides God’s Word to all generations. He brings restoration to a world weary with sin.”

**EPISTLE: 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 NAS-95**

Jesus is risen and reigning. Once He conquers all His enemies; then God the Father will reign!

<sup>20</sup> But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. <sup>21</sup> For since by a man [Adam] came death, by a man also [Jesus, the God-Man] came the resurrection of the dead.

<sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die [Romans 5:12], so also in Christ all will be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits [on Easter Sunday], after that those who are Christ's at His coming [those who died in repentance or have a repentant heart when Jesus returns], <sup>24</sup> then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For He [Jesus] must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

<sup>27</sup> For HE [that is, God the Father] HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS [Jesus'] FEET. But when He [the Father] says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He [the Father] is excepted [not included] who put all things in subjection to Him [Jesus].

<sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One [that is, to God the Father] who subjected all things to Him, so that God [the Father] may be all in all.

L: The Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God!**

### Summary of who is reigning:

1. During the OT – God the Father
2. During the NT – Jesus (Mt. 28:18)
3. In Eternity – God the Father (v. 28)

**HOLY GOSPEL: Matthew 25:31-46 NAS-95**

The Final Judgment!

L: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the twenty-fifth chapter.

**C: Glory to You, O LORD.**

<sup>31</sup> "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious [white] throne [Rev. 20:11].

<sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered

before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; <sup>33</sup> and He will put the sheep [the repentant ones] on His right, and the goats [the unrepentant ones] on the left."

<sup>34</sup> "Then the King [King Jesus] will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are [having been] blessed of My Father [chosen to be His own], inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. <sup>35</sup> 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; <sup>36</sup> naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'"

<sup>37</sup> "Then the righteous [those who are trusting in Jesus for eternal life] will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You *something* to drink?

<sup>38</sup> 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? <sup>39</sup> 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'"

<sup>40</sup> "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the

extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even the least of them, you did it to Me.*” [The sheep are repentant believers who are ready for Jesus’ return, manage their possessions according to God’s will, and help those who are in need.]

<sup>41</sup> “Then He will also say to those on His left [the unrepentant ones – those without godly sorrow and/or without trust in Jesus for eternal life], ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones [having been accursed (Gal. 3:10)], into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; <sup>42</sup> for I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’”

<sup>44</sup> “Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’”

<sup>45</sup> “Then He [Jesus] will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to

Me.’” [The goats are those who are not ready for Jesus’ return, do not manage their possessions according to God’s will, and do not help those who are in need.]

<sup>46</sup> “These [the unrepentant] will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous [the repentant] into eternal life.”

L: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

### Are We Saved by Faith or by Works?

- First, we are given faith.
- Second, we do good works (Hebrews 11:6).
- The sheep – *from their faith* – acted.
- The goats – *lacking faith* – did not act.

### Great Advice for the Goats, *the*

**Unrepentant:** “Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).

### SERMON RESPONSE: *Let Us Pray*

A: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit. Amen.

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