

**1st Reading: Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17**

*God is the shepherd who will judge between one sheep and another.*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28**

*In the end God will be all in all*

**Gospel: Matthew 22:34-40**

*God has prepared a kingdom for us where the least are the most.*

**The Judgment seat belongs to our King, the Creator**

**God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good.**

Today marks the end of another Liturgical year. Our journey with Matthew's Gospel has once again ended. So this is the final exam of the liturgical semester: we have journeyed from the poverty of Christ's birth and conception through the liturgical lessons of Ordinary Time, where we have been presented with lessons for our heads and hearts designed to help us say "yes" to Christ's invitation to our self-surrenderings and risings to Christ's new way of life. So we celebrate Christ's Kingship in our lives.

Let me play a little word association with you. When I say "The King" whom or what do you think of? (Wait for responses) It's a construct that is somewhat foreign to us in the United States where we intentionally avoided monarchy as a governance structure. Certainly in the people mentioned, and the games we played as children, i.e. "King of the hill", there is a sense of being on top of the heap or in charge of things or the best at something or other. Well clearly Jesus is turning that construct on its head. The King is concerned with compassion, mercy; the king is concerned with relationship. The leader is compared with a shepherd who cares for the injured, the lost. The whole "King" thing relates back to the lineage of Christ coming from David's ancestral line, the greatest King in Israel's history, who was also a shepherd par excellence.

The King described in our lessons today is more concerned about "kinship" than power, might, or glory. Judgment will be based on how we treated our brothers and sisters in need: the hungry, the thirsty, the immigrant, the naked, the ill, and those in prison. The separation, the judgment of sheep and goats will be based on

how well we are able to live out, or better, live into the corporal works of mercy in our lives. In Jesus' Kingdom less is more, and how well we see and practice this, the more like Jesus we will become.

Who in our lives is the least: is it a self-righteous roommate, an obnoxious sibling, or co-worker, an arrogant colleague, an unreasonable professor, a gay neighbor, a homeless panhandler, my spouse? Friday evening, I met Tara in the parking Lot at Meijers. She was from Indiana and lost her wallet and needed gas to get back; but I was late getting home (not a new experience) and really tired and just brushed her off with a lie of inability to help. Then, since I had this reflection on my mind, I stewed about how awful that situation would be and why didn't I help her. Why did I miss this engagement God was sending my way?

God as our creator is the benevolent artisan who is constantly adjusting his creation to bring about its perfection or completion. God's plan is for us to be with God forever: it is the completion of our desires. In heaven, or Christ's kingdom, we will completely be one with God who is loving relationship. As St. Augustine famously says "Lord our heart finds is restless until it rests in you." God invites us to enter into the joy of God's life: the community of supreme delight. As St. Thomas Aquinas notes, St. Augustine again reminds us "The fullness of joy will not enter into those who rejoice, but those who rejoice will enter into joy." This is the community that several our catechumens are choosing to accept the invitation to participate more fully into this weekend; and are requesting our support, prayers, encouragement and welcome as they continue on.

So as we say "YES!" to our creator's invitation, we need not worry about whether we will be sheep or goats at the end. We do, however, need to be more attentive to the invitations to touch and be touched by "those others".

God is good, **all the time**. All the time, **God is good**.