

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. 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. 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 took Me in, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you visited Me.' Matthew 25.31-36

In the Psalms, God is called king 25 times...rock 18 times...fortress 10+ times, and shepherd just three times. One is Psalm 80.1: *Hear us, Shepherd of Israel... You who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth. Awaken your might; come and save us.* Another is Psalm 28.9: *Save your people and bless your inheritance; be their shepherd and carry them forever.* Do we note that the Shepherd of the Psalms both comes and saves?

Psalm 23 is the Shepherd's Psalm: *The Lord is my Shepherd...He restores my soul [brings me back]...surely goodness and mercy follows [pursues] me all the days of my life...I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.* Do we sense the Shepherd pursues and brings us back with kindness and compassion?

In today's Old Testament reading [Ezekiel 34], God declares Himself as the coming shepherd: *I will search for the lost and bring them back...I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak...I will shepherd the flock with justice...I will save my flock and they will no longer be plundered.* How comforting is it to know that Almighty God acts in our life as the Good Shepherd who searches and saves?

In the New Testament all four-gospel writers have accounts of Jesus as the Good Shepherd Who seeks and saves. And, in John 10 Jesus says of Himself: *I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. My sheep hear my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can pluck them out of my hand.* How good is that!

And today, the last Sunday of the church year, we hear Jesus' speak: *'when the Son of Man comes in glory, and all the angels with him, he will be seated on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on His right and the goats of His left.'*

Let's visualize Jesus 'walking in the garden in the cool of the day' as the Good Shepherd, seeking our rebellious first parents from their hiding place after and restoring them to Himself [Genesis 3.8-13]. Jesus is the Good Shepherd of Genesis, Psalms, and Ezekiel. In the New Testament proclaimed Himself as the Good Shepherd who seeks and saves the lost. And, when He returns in glory on the last day, believers at His right hand will hear these comforting words: *'Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'*

'Come'

1. Come in the Old Testament has the sense of walking together...of intimacy, as reflected in this passage from Isaiah 1.18:
 - *Come, let us reason together says the Lord. Though your sins are scarlet they shall be as wool; through they are crimson, they shall be white as snow.*
2. Take Isaiah's thought in to the New Testament and reflect on these words of Jesus:
 - *Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.* Matthew 11.28
 - *I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me will not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.* John 6.35

'Blessed of my Father' – a state of BEING in the presence of God. BEING in the presence of God means we are blessed people. Jesus reminds us:

- *I am the Good Shepherd. I sought you out and brought you back...we are blessed*
- *I am the Good Shepherd. I laid down my life for you...we are blessed*
- *I am the Good Shepherd. I call you by name. You belong to me...we are blessed*
- *I am the Good Shepherd. I give you eternal life. No one can take you away from me...we are blessed*

'...take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'

- that perfect relationship with the perfect God in a perfect paradise forever.
 - the *inheritance* that was lost because of Adam and Eve's rebellion
 - the *inheritance* that was restored through the perfect life, innocent death and resurrection of Christ
- we await this *inheritance* when Christ returns on the last day.
 - Ephesians 2: **4** *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

Blessed people are grateful people. Reflect on these passages:

- Hebrews 12.28: *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,*
- Psalm 100: **4** *Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. 5 For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

Blessed people are waiting people. Reflect on these passages

- Psalm 130... *I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.*
- Micah 7.7... *But as for me, I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.*
- Psalm 27.13-14... *I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!*

Blessed people are busy people

- *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 took Me in, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you visited Me.'*
- The Rev. Dr. Harry Wendt, originator of Crossways Bible Studies says of this verse: "There are only two people in the world...you and Christ in every person you meet."
 - There is Christ in our spouse, our children, in our neighbor, the check-out person at the store, that rascally person almost impossible to get along with, and all sorts of others among whom God would have be known by love, to live by faith and be voices of hope in this changing, confusing world..

On this Christ the King Sunday we live in eager anticipation of the Lord's return. That eager anticipation keeps us living productive Kingdom lives.

Grace and Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.