

THIRTY- FOURTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR
The feast of Christ the King: Matthew 25:31-46; November 22, 2020.

This is that feast of Christ the King that we are celebrating today. It has nothing to do with crowns, palaces, or robes, concepts foreign to us Americans. Rather, it has to do with the basic question: to whom or to what do we give our allegiance? This is a pretty basic question. It deals with how, we, on the everyday level, act or should act. It deals with the daily decisions we make when we leave here, decisions that reveal the allegiance we have. Here is one practical example of allegiance: When Hitler rose to power, he overran Europe. There were many heroes who resisted Hitler. One of them was a King, King Christian of Denmark, aptly named, a person of character and principle.

One famous story tells of the time when the order came from the Nazis that all Jews were to identify themselves by wearing armbands with the yellow Star of David. King Christian, whose tiny country had been occupied in 1940, said, No, it's not right. One Danish person was the same as the next one, he declared. So what did he do? He put on the first Star of David and let it be known that every loyal Dane should do the same. The next day in Copenhagen almost the entire population was walking around wearing the yellow Star of David armbands. As a result, the Danes saved ninety percent of their Jewish population. Later, the Nazis decided that all 8000 Jews would be rounded up and sent to concentration camps. King Christian again reacted. He organized a resistance effort that smuggled 7500 Jews to Sweden within a two-week period.

It goes without saying that he suffered for his allegiance to principle rather than to Hitler. He was imprisoned for two years and, after his release when the Third Reich fell in 1945, he died a few years later from his ill treatment. As I said, the feast of Christ the King asks to whom or to what do we pay our allegiance, what guides our life? **Well, for King Christian of Denmark it was justice and charity, the very things Jesus preached.** So, there you are: King Christian of Copenhagen, Denmark; Today on this feast let us collectively pray for the courage to add our names to these faithful followers of Christ the King.

Today's gospel is the last of Jesus' major sermons in Matthew, and it dramatically portrays what Jesus means by "blessed are the merciful."

Today's gospel is one of the best known of Jesus' parables. It tells us, first of all, that at the end of time there will be only two kingdoms: the kingdom of God where there will be happiness beyond anything we can imagine and there will be the kingdom of Satan where there will be endless remorse and suffering. Notice that we're the ones who make the decision as to which kingdom we will belong - we make that choice not by what we say but by the way we live.

In the Gospel, a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats, said Jesus, so too shall there be a great division on the final day. Those on the right hand will be allowed entrance into the kingdom, while those on the left will be denied it. And the great surprise is that those who thought they were religious 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. I would like to suggest three points that this parable is attempting to make this morning.

First, the parable suggests that we are to view each individual as though he or she was Christ himself. "Lord, when did we feed you, or clothe you, or visit you in prison?" was the question that was asked.

Came the response: “*What you did for the least of these my brothers and sister of mine, you did it for me.*” The Second point that this parable that this parable, suggests is that in the end the criteria by which we shall all be judged will be simple acts of kindness. In the story the King allows entrance into his kingdom not by affiliation with any particular religious group, or fame, or fortune, or credential that might be listed in an obituary. No, the final judgment is based upon how kind an individual was: feeding those who were hungry, showing concern for those in prison, taking care of those who did not have sufficient clothing.

The third point, this parable suggests that in the end **we are judged not on the bad that we do, but the good that we do not do.** Those on the left hand of the King were denied entrance into the Kingdom.

Why? Because he said, I was thirsty and you gave me no water, I was in prison and you never came to see me, I was without clothes and you never gave me any. We think of divine judgment as opposite of this. We think that the thing that will get us into heaven is by refraining from certain sins. Conversely, we think sin will send us to hell. A religious person is one who does not smoke, does not drink too much, does not curse. That misses the point, dear brothers, and sisters!

There are many in church who are fine, decent respectable people who are not doing anything for Christ.

This last Sunday the Thirty third Sunday of the year, November 15th; Jesus told the story about a man who took his talent and buried it. **Why did Jesus condemn him? Not because he gambled it away, not because he frivolously spent it, but because he did nothing with it!** Those on the left-hand side (the goats); were kept out of the Kingdom of God, not because of what they did but because of what they failed to do. In the old catholic language, It was not sins of commission, but sins of omission.

Mother Teresa once said: “*Many today are starving for ordinary bread. But there is another kind of hunger — the hunger to be wanted, to be loved, to be recognized. Nakedness too is not just the want of clothes, but also about loss of dignity, purity, and self-respect. And homelessness is not just the want of a house; there is the homelessness of being rejected, of being unwanted in a throwaway society. The biggest disease in the world today is the feeling of being unwanted and uncared for. The greatest evil in the world is lack of love, the terrible indifference towards one's neighbor.*”

We need to look upon each person as though he or she was Christ. Kindness is the criteria by which we will be judged. It is not the bad that we do that will keep us out of heaven (we have been forgiven for our sin deeds); rather, it is the good we fail to do that that will make us a sheep or a goat.

Let us pray that the Good Lord may warm Our cold hearts with His grace, so that we His disciples may produce the fruits of love!

Amen.