

Liturgy of the Word

Some background The readings given in the Lectionary for this Sunday mix an agricultural theme with information about the Kingdom of God. We start with Ezekiel presenting the Lord as the caring shepherd who takes particular care of the lost sheep and those that are weak and vulnerable. The sheep theme continues in the Gospel with the familiar passage of the Last Judgement, where the King divides people up into sheep or goats, depending on their actions. We're encouraged to reach out to the hungry, the thirsty, the naked and the sick – caring for others as if we are caring for Jesus. In the middle, we hear from Saint Paul's first letter to the Corinthians – a challenging passage that talks about the eternal life that Jesus offers to everyone: Christ's death and resurrection destroys death and prepares us for a kingdom of peace where God reigns over all creatures.

These readings fit in well with our theme of **Reclaim the Future!** The scriptures prepare us for what is to come – and they present life with God as a life that has respect for our world and for all people.

First Reading A reading from the prophet Ezekiel (34:11-12, 15-17)

The Lord says this: I am going to look after my flock myself and keep all of it in view. As a shepherd keeps all his flock in view when he stands up in the middle of his scattered sheep, so shall I keep my sheep in view. I shall rescue them from wherever they have been scattered during the mist and darkness. I myself will pasture my sheep, I myself will show them where to rest – it is the Lord who speaks. I shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the wounded and make the weak strong. I shall watch over the fat and healthy. I shall be a true shepherd to them.

As for you, my sheep, the Lord says this: I will judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and he-goats.

This is the word of the Lord.

Psalm 23

R The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd,
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.
- 2 Near restful waters he leads me,
to revive my drooping spirit.
He guides me along the right path;
he is true to his name.
- 3 You have prepared a banquet for me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing.
- 4 Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever.

Second Reading A reading from the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians (15:20-26,28)

Christ has been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep. Death came through one man and in the same way the resurrection of the dead has come through one man. Just as all men die in Adam, so all men will be brought to life in Christ; but all of them in their proper order: Christ as the first-fruits and then, after the coming of Christ, those who belong to him. After that will come the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, having done away with every sovereignty, authority and power. For he must be king until he has put all his enemies under his feet and the last of the enemies to be destroyed is death. And when everything is subjected to him, then the Son himself will be subject in his turn to the One who subjected all things to him, so that God may be all in all.

This is the word of the Lord.

Gospel Reading A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew (25:31-46)

Jesus said to his disciples: 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me."

Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you?" And the King will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me."

Next he will say to those on his left hand, "Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you never gave me food; I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink; I was a stranger and you never made me welcome, naked and you never clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me." Then it will be their turn to ask, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or naked, sick or in prison, and did not come to your help?" Then he will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it for me." And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.