

CELEBRATE SABBATH

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

**Trust in the steadfast love of God and strive to be steadfast
on your journey even when your world seems to be falling apart.**

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

Ezekiel was a prophet in Exile. Chapter 34 is the Prophet's critique of the performance of the leaders, the shepherds of the people. The good shepherd had the well-being of his sheep in his heart. The leaders of Ezekiel's time were not concerned about the well-being of their people. They were concerned about themselves and used their power for personal gain. Ezekiel saw the exile itself as a result of the exploitation of the innocent people by their leaders. People have suffered and were scattered and exiled from their land and were forced to wander aimlessly like "sheep without shepherd" in Babylon.

Ezekiel promised a new beginning. God will replace the unfaithful and irresponsible shepherds and God himself will lead his people. God would gather his exiled and scattered people and tenderly care for them, lead them home and reestablish them as his own people again.

Psalms 23

David had been a shepherd and he knew how to care for the sheep and what it cost him. He became shepherd of his people. He had to figure out how he should care for them. He knew the sheep well and now he must come to know his people, their ways, their needs and their concerns. This problem gave him a new awareness of what God, the true shepherd, is like in his relationship to his people.

God knows his people just as they are in all their need, in their stubbornness and stupidity as well as in their value and worth. Like a good shepherd...God reaches out, searches out to the lost and keeps them safe. Like a shepherd....God provides food, drink, safety, light in darkness, comfort and strength in "dark valley moments". This Psalm proclaims the enduring, steadfast, loyal, unconquerable love of God, the good shepherd, who will never let us slip out of his hands!

**The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
In verdant pastures he gives me repose,
Beside restful waters he leads me; He refreshes my soul.**

I Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

Paul assured his Corinthian readers that Christ had conquered sin and death by his death and resurrection and that he is now Shepherd King. Unlike other (earthly) kings who gloat in their victories and enjoy the loot, the victory of Jesus is shared by all. Paul says, “we too shall share in Christ’s victory over death and sin”.

Paul goes on to say that Christ is the “first-fruits” of what will happen to all his followers. For the Jews, the “first-fruits” were a sign of the harvest to come. The resurrection of Jesus was the sign of the resurrection of all believers, which was yet to come. Just as the new barley could not be used until the first fruits have been duly offered, so the new harvest of life could not come until Christ had been raised from the dead.

The Jews believed that no man existed by himself and for himself. Every individual existed in a web of connections.... “no man is an island” as Thomas Merton says. Each person lives in connection with other persons around him, before him and after him. With this understanding of man, the Jews had come to believe that all had sinned in Adam. When Adam sinned all sinned and all were under the penalty of death. Paul says, in Christ all are conquered from the power of sin and death. The effects of sin and death are overcome in the death and resurrection of Christ. Christ has conquered death and sin and liberated us and fulfilled his Father’s will for us.

Mathew 25:31-46

In this excerpt, Mathew invites us into a vivid imaginative courtroom scene where judgment of those who are worthy to be welcomed into eternal life is taking place. The highlight of the scene is the criteria for the judgment of worthiness: **loving kindness**. Loving persons do loving acts. Kind people do kind deeds. It is help in simple, ordinary things, response to daily needs of ordinary people: giving food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, comforting the sick – things that anyone can do, things that do not require training in skills or a degree or diploma from a university. It is not performance of miracles or preaching of great sermons or donations of large sums of money or holding higher positions in society or any recognition offered to a person by the world, but in simple acts of loving kindness which has become part of the very nature, character of a person.

Acts of kindness are done not for a reward, not even thinking that it is done for the Lord, but it has become part of a person’s nature. It is help which is uncalculating. In the parable, those who helped did not know that they were helping Christ and gaining merit for eternal life. And those who failed to help said, “if we had known it was you, we would have helped”. Acts of loving kindness flow from loving hearts, from loving people without expecting praise, reward and merits....it is the nature, the character of loving people to do loving things in response to the simple, everyday needs of ordinary people.

The judgment is about what you have become and not what you have done or not done. You have become a new creation. You have become a noble person. You have become sons of God. You have become sensitive to those around you. You have become especially sensitive to the marginal people in the community. You have reached out in kindness because you just couldn't do otherwise.

Today is the feast of Christ the King - we proclaim Christ as our king and celebrate his kingship over us, rejoice in our royal and noble character and pledge our loyalty to Christ our king and master and Lord. Noble people must live noble lives. Kingdom people must live kingdom values. The values of kingdom are lived out in response to the simple, daily need of ordinary people.

Take a moment and pray: May your kingdom come! May your will be done! May your purpose be fulfilled! May I bring my will into harmony with your will, O Lord!

Saint of the Day, November 26 - St. Columban and 14 other saints are remembered this day.

Saint Columban, (Columbanus in Latin) was born around 540 in Leinster, Ireland. He was well-educated in the areas of grammar, rhetoric, geometry, and the Holy Scriptures. He was one of the greatest missionaries of the Celtic church, who initiated a revival of spirituality on the European continent. Educated in the monastery of Bangor, County Down, Columban left Ireland for Europe around 590 with 12 monks. They won wide respect for the rigor of their discipline, their preaching, and their commitment to charity and religious life in a time characterized by clerical laxity and civil strife. Columban established several monasteries in Europe which became centers of religion and culture.

Columban became unpopular because of his attacks on the degeneracy in the Burgundian court and among local clergy. He reproved the king for his licentious life, insisting that he should get married. Since this threatened the power of the queen mother, Columban was deported back to Ireland. His ship ran aground in a storm, and he continued his work in Europe, ultimately arriving in Italy, where he found favor with the king of the Lombards. In his last years he established the famous monastery of Bobbio, where he died in 615. His writings include a treatise on penance and against Arianism, sermons, poetry, and his monastic rule.

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