

**“The Call to Faithful Living”**  
Matthew 25: 31-46/ Revelation 1:4b-8

Today, we gather to celebrate **Christ the King Sunday**. In the church calendar, this is the last Sunday of the year that marks the culmination of the church year. It is a time to reflect on the authority and lordship of our King, Jesus Christ and also a time to reflect on our role as followers of Christ. The lectionary scripture from Revelation 1:4b-8, identifies God **“who is and who was and who is to come” (v. 4b)**. God was at work to transform the world through Jesus’ christ, by his death, believers have been liberated from sin and death. We experience the risen Christ’s love in the present. Jesus has inaugurated a new creation, so the new earth is already here in the spirit. But God’s rule is not completed yet. We are anticipating the transformation of the whole cosmos. The story of God’s renewal of the cosmos is not yet over. There is more to come from this “coming God”.

**What should we do while we wait for his second coming?** In today's Gospel reading, Jesus speaks to his disciples about his return, and the final judgment. The description of that judgment gives us a clear picture of what to do and how to live while we await the Lord's return.

Matthew 25:31-46 describes, Son of Man coming in His glory, surrounded by angels, to sit on His glorious throne. From the throne, the king uses his authority to separate the people. Jesus separates the righteous from the unrighteous based on how they treated "the least of these." The sheep, representing the righteous, are commended for their acts of compassion—feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, caring for the sick, and visiting those in prison. While the sheep are blessed and invited into the kingdom of heaven, the goats are condemned for their lack of compassion. Jesus reveals that they did not extend themselves to those in need and neglected the opportunity to serve Christ. And then Jesus makes this important statement in today's passage. Jesus says, **“just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”**

Jesus identified himself with the least and aligned himself with the most vulnerable. This statement, **“Whatever you do to the least of these, you do to me”** challenges societal norms that often devalue individuals based on their circumstances. It is a powerful statement to encourage us to see the face of Christ in those who are marginalized, overlooked, or suffering in our communities. By doing so, he emphasizes the importance of compassion, kindness, and care for all people, especially those who are less fortunate.

Who are the "least of these"? It can mean the weak, the vulnerable, the powerless, the overlooked, the neglected, the ignored, the marginalized, the poor, and the suffering.

Who are the least of these around you? In our society, we often assign value and privilege to people based on their background, and treat them as better than or less than accordingly. As we reflect on this passage, Jesus calls us to look beyond these distinctions and recognize the inherent dignity of every human being.

### **"Imago Dei"**

We are grounded in the belief that we are all created in the image of God—**"Imago Dei"** (Latin phrase that means "Image of God"). It is a theological concept, rooted in Genesis 1:27. There is no one who is better than or less than, in God's eyes, we are all children of God, made in God's image.

So we have to recognize the image of God in others whether we like them or not: The parable teaches us that every person we encounter bears the image of God and recognizes the presence of Christ. When we align our perspective with Imago Dei, we can treat those around us with kindness, dignity, and respect, regardless of their ethnicity, race, gender, education, sexual orientation, physical condition, socioeconomic status, or anything else that society stigmatizes. What we are taking from this parable is not to ignore or overlook the least of these, but to **look into the face of that person and see the face of Jesus there**. We need to have eyes to see and care for them like Jesus did. **As followers of Christ, we are called to recognize and respect the dignity of all people.**

### **“Compassion”**

The other message we can learn from this parable is that **Compassion is a mark of true discipleship**. Jesus calls us to a life of compassion, actively seeking opportunities to serve and care for others. Out of compassion, Jesus addresses the needs of others, such as providing food, water, clothing, and care.

*John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, emphasized that salvation is not a static event but an ongoing journey of transformation by God's grace. We are called to grow in holiness and sanctification, which involves overcoming self-centeredness and actively engaging in God's work of mercy.*

We are all on the journey of salvation. Salvation means more than simply being saved to go to heaven when you die. The Greek word of salvation is sozo (σωζω): restoration, holiness, make a whole, rescue, wellness. To be biblically saved means there are also earthly effects on our lives today. We are saved by faith in Christ alone through the grace of God but, **our faith should be demonstrated through tangible acts of mercy and love. Salvation is an ongoing experience of God's gracious presence that transforms us and transforms the world.**

We are encouraged to respond to human needs with compassion and work for justice in our communities. Participating in the reign of Christ requires active engagement. We are called to step out of our comfort zones, reach out to those in need, and address the brokenness in our world. Christ King Sunday is not just a celebration of Christ's authority; it is a call to action. Jesus invites us to actively engage with our communities, reaching out to those who are suffering and marginalized. Each act of kindness, no matter how small, is an expression of our faith and an opportunity to serve Christ Himself. **In participating in God's work of Mercy and compassion, we will fully enjoy the pleasures of the reign of Christ for all eternity.** That restoration can begin now and here through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

On this Christ the King Sunday, let us recommit ourselves to the call of compassion and service. As we await Christ's return, may we be known for our love, kindness, and active engagement with those in need. Let us approach each person we encounter as someone who bears the image of God, deserving of respect and dignity. May our lives reflect the heart of our King, and may we be empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry out His work of mercy and love in the world. Amen.