

***ctkAlive!* Scripture Study
Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ
King of the Universe
2020—A Cycle**



Source: Rev. [Geoffrey Plant](#),
Archdiocese of Sydney, Australia
Nov 18, 2019

Note: For your convenience and to broaden your benefit from this and all sessions in this series, you will find links to books, authors, and other references mentioned in the text.

Caution: Links to the internet are like rabbits dashing across a hunter's path. Instinct says, "Chase after that link!" Instead, we suggest waiting until you have followed the entire reflection. Then take all the time you wish to follow these interesting and educational links.

Exception: In the course of these reflections, you may have an opportunity to watch or listen to a relevant song or video.

Opening Prayer

(edited and abridged for use here)

Holy One,
enthroned in glory over all creation,
you are shepherd to the *lost* . . . and to the *least*.
Help me to imagine you among the *poor* . . .
feeding the hungry . . .
giving drink to the thirsty . . .
welcoming the stranger . . .
clothing the naked . . .
and *visiting* those sick or in prison—
so that I may follow your example
and share in your eternal kingdom.
Let your work in me make you present
to reign with justice . . . compassion . . . and love.
Amen.

Source: [Presbyterian Church of the USA](#)

Introduction to the Feast of Christ the King of the Universe

Presidents and world leaders, both good and evil, come to the fore then fade into history. Christ our King is always present to us, front and center. He delivers on the promise laid out in Matthew 25, "I was (*in need*) . . . and you (*helped*) me."

In 1925, [Pope Pius XI](#) instituted the Feast of Christ the King in response to growing secularism and nationalism around the world. [Pope Paul VI](#) amended the title of the Feast to Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. He also moved the date from late October to the last Sunday of the liturgical cycle, thereby passing the torch to the new liturgical year beginning on the First Sunday of Advent. Catholics share this feast with the Lutheran Church, Anglican Communion, Methodist churches, Moravian Church, Reformed churches, and other Christian denominations.

Readings:

Ezekiel 34: 11-12, 15-17 “I will search for the *lost* and lead back the *strays*. I will bind up the *injured* and strengthen the *weak*.”

Through the prophet, Yahweh, like a good shepherd, announces a radical social change in the life of Israel: he will replace all the shepherds. Here “shepherds” applies to *civil* authorities, including kings, magistrates, and judges.

Psalm 23: 1-6 “The Lord is my shepherd. . . .”

In this weekend’s liturgy, we have the pleasure of revisiting the most widely recognized and loved of all King David’s psalms. On the 28th Sunday of Ordinary Time and on All Souls Day, Nov. 2, we prayed this song in our recent liturgies. We never tire of it because it reminds us who truly guides and protects us through the course of our lives.

First Corinthians 15: 20-26, 28 “Christ has been raised from the dead. . . .”

Whoever shares the faith of the apostles accepts the Resurrection of Jesus as a fact. Paul lays out, in mystical terms, the consequences of that faith. Faith tells us Jesus not only lived *among* us, but he also lived *for* us, and lives *within* us. We too will join the Lord in Afterlife. The Apostle to all nations also asks us to expand our individualistic vision of Christianity, that is, to see that faith demands our concern for *everyone’s* final destiny.

Matthew 25: 31-46 The Last Judgment—“Come blessed of my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

This parable, combined with the Beatitudes (Matthew 5: 3-10), lays out the foundation and entirety of all Catholic social and moral teaching. Together, they reveal Jesus’ all-encompassing doctrine of “compassion.” True compassion transcends all human boundaries of race, color, national origin and—yes, also—creed.

A Reading from the Book of Ezekiel (34: 11-12, 15-17)

“Indeed Yahweh says this: ‘I, myself, will care for my sheep and watch over them. As the shepherd looks after his flock when he finds them scattered, so will I watch over my sheep; and gather them from all the places where they were scattered in a time of cloud and fog.

“I, myself, will tend my sheep and let them rest—word of Yahweh. I will search for the lost and lead back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak; but the fat and strong will be eliminated. I will shepherd my flock with justice. As for you, my flock—says Yahweh—I will distinguish between one sheep and another and set apart rams and goats.”

Personal Reflection

The prophet foreshadows the key message in this week’s gospel reading. In doing so, we discover the unbroken link between what we call the Old and New Testaments.

— *How aware have I been over the course of my Catholic life of the “Jewishness” of Jesus, who rooted his life on earth in sharing not only Jewish blood but also the foundation stones of his upbringing in the Jewish faith?*

— *When have I caught myself in moments of conscious and unconscious bias against people of Jewish blood and faith?*

— *Being honest in my personal review of discrimination, I recall this occasion when I slipped into racial/religious bigotry against anyone of any race or creed?*

Antiphon: Psalm 23 (all verses)

To God, our shepherd and host (a psalm of confidence)

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside the still waters.

He restores my soul.

He guides me through the right paths

for his name’s sake.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Although I walk through the valley

of the shadow of death,

I fear no evil, for you are beside me:

your rod and your staff comfort me.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

You spread a table before me

in the presence of my foes.

You anoint my head with oil;

my cup is overflowing.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Goodness and kindness will follow me
all the days of my life,
I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
as long as I live.
The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Personal Reflection

— *What is my favorite word, phrase, or image in Psalm 23? Write it here:*

Though the original psalmist sings, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want,” there were many times in David’s life when his baser “wants” drove him to do some really terrible things, including his ordering the death of Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah, a loyal general in his own army.

— *As I pray about today’s psalm, what “wants” of mine are as yet unmet?*

— *Does my list of unmet “wants” contain anything that that goes counter to the spirit of Psalm 23? What is it? What will I do today to eliminate it from my list?*

From the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (15: 20-26, 28)

“Christ has been raised from the dead, and he comes before all those who have fallen asleep. A human being brought death; a human being also brings resurrection of the dead. For, as in Adam all die, so, in Christ, all will be made alive. However, each one in his own time: first Christ, then Christ’s people, when he comes. Then, the end will come, when Christ delivers the kingdom to God the Father, after having destroyed every rule, authority, and power. For he must reign and put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed will be death.

“When the Father has subjected everything to him, the Son will place himself under the One who subjected everything to him. From then on, God will be all in all.”

Personal Reflection

Again, Paul picks up the theme of the “end times.” He lays out the plan as he perceives it in his still imperfect human understanding. Unlike the first Christians, most of us don’t concern ourselves much with the sequences of the end times and final resurrection of the dead. Our concern relates more to this: “What will happen at the instant after *my own death*?”

— *How do I envision the instant immediately following my death? Do I welcome whatever might happen next? Or does the thought fill me with dread? If it does, why? What further assurance do I need to hear?*

Today's news is full of frightening covid-19 statistics on how many Americans and others are sick and how many deaths have occurred. And how many more in the coming months.

— *What am I doing to protect myself from this disease?*

— *What am I doing to protect my family and other people from becoming ill?*

— *How do I react to the news that our current way of life could last until mid-2021 (or longer)?*

Proclamation from the Gospel according to Matthew (25: 31-46)

Jesus said: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory with all his angels, he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be brought before him; and, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, so will he do with them, placing the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left.

"The king will say to those on his right, 'Come, blessed of my Father! Take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. For I was *hungry*, and you fed me. I was *thirsty*, and you gave me something to drink. I was *a stranger*, and you welcomed me into your home. I was *naked*, and you clothed me. I was *sick*, and you visited me. I was *in prison*, and you came to see me.'

"Then the righteous will ask him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry, and give you food; thirsty, and give you something to drink; or a stranger, and welcome you; or naked, and clothe you? When did we see you sick, or in prison, and go to see you?'

"The king will answer, 'Truly I say to you: just as you did it for one of the *least* of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did it to *me*.'

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Go, cursed people, out of my sight, into the eternal fire, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels! For I was hungry, and you *did not* give me anything to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not welcome me into your house; I was naked, and you did not clothe me; I was sick, and in prison, and you did not visit me.'

"They, too, will ask, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry, thirsty, naked or a stranger, sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

"The king will answer them, 'Truly I say to you: just as you did not do it for one of the least of these, you did not do it for me.'

"And these will go into eternal punishment; but the just, to eternal life."

Personal Reflection

During this time of shelter-in-place, family members may be unaware that they are the Christ to each other. Absence of this spiritual insight exposes us to yielding to our worst instincts. To support this, we hear reports of rising alcohol and drug abuse among family members, a growth in family discord/violence, and a rise in violent crime.

— *How has my mental attitude toward life changed—for the better or worst—since the March 2020 shutdown?*

— *How might I improve my own daily attitude? What can I do lift the spirits of family members who are experiencing mental and/or spiritual suffering during this time?*

— *What do I hear Jesus saying to me personally in this gospel passage? How does this parable call me to perform works of mercy and compassion within my own home this week?*

Shelter-in-Place

Americans and all peoples of the world are now in a holding pattern awaiting completion and approval of a corona virus vaccination. We congratulate and pray for the scientists making this happen. On the downside, vaccine developers and processors warn us to expect only a gradual distribution process based on certain criteria of need. This means many of us can expect a long tough winter and continued sheltering orders as all this gets sorted out. Sadly, the effect on service businesses, jobs, and housing can only get worse.

— *How mentally prepared am I to “ride out the virus storm”?*

— *If I have not personally suffered financial setbacks, what am I doing—or will I do—to help those hardest hit by inability to earn a living, pay rent, etc. This applies especially the fortunate ones among us, who find our bank accounts growing and our living expenses actually shrinking.*

Write about your feelings and lived experience of these issues during your journaling time (below).

Journaling Prompts

What insights have I gained from reflecting on this weekend’s liturgical readings?

Suggested prompt:

— *After reflecting on this weekend’s scriptures, what impresses me the most?*

We mustn’t simply be grateful “recipients” of God’s good gifts. We also need to “give back.”

— *How will this week’s Scriptures and current societal events impact the way I think, live, love—and “give back”—during the week ahead?*

For Inspirational Viewing / Reading

Videos:

[Bishop Robert Barron](#) addresses the theological/biblical meaning of the kingship of Christ on YouTube. He always has a new and insightful take on familiar parables (30 minutes, but worth your time).

A summary of Pope Francis's new encyclical, [Fratelli Tutti](#) (30 min.)
A clear and spirited video featuring Fr. Ivel Mendenha C.Ss.R. (Redemptorist).
He takes us through each of the eight chapters, highlighting the important features in each chapter.

Book:

[Fratelli Tutti](#) (*On Fraternity and Social Friendship*)

A heartfelt, beautifully written letter to the world, this is a wonderful read that often calls us beyond the printed word to read between the lines, as well.

Music:

[Hymn to Christ the King](#)—composed in the 1940s by [Fr. Martin B Hellriegel](#) in Baden, PA.

Preview of Next Session

First Sunday of Advent (beginning of the B Cycle liturgical readings)

Book of Isaiah 63: 16-17, 19; 64: 2-7

Psalms 80: 2-3, 15-16, 18-19

II Corinthians 1: 3-9 “In Christ you are

Mark 13: 33-37 “Be watchful! Be alert!”

Closing Prayer

(edited and abridged for use here)

To Christ Our King

O Lord our God,
You alone are the Most Holy King and Ruler of all nations.
We pray to you in the great expectation of receiving
from you mercy, peace, justice, and all good things.

Protect our leaders, our families,
and the land of our birth.
Guard us we pray, Most Faithful One.
Forgive us, Sovereign King, our sins against you.

Jesus, you are a King of Mercy.
Have mercy on us and forgive us.
Most awe-inspiring King, we bow before you and pray:
'May your Reign, your Kingdom, be recognized on earth. Amen.'

Source: [My Catholic Life](#)

Questions?

Send any questions or comments you might have to algarrotto@comcast.net

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