

Matthew 25:31-46

“I am Jesus little lamb. Ever glad at heart I am. For my shepherd gently guides me. Knows my need and well provides me. Loves me everyday the same. Even calls me by my name.” From Lutheran Worship, Hymn 517, verse 1.

From St John 10 we read, “I am the good Shepherd...I know my own and my own know me.” The sheep hear his voice and He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out.”

From Psalm 23, “The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want.”

From our psalm (95) for this day. “For He is our God. And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand”

From our Old Testament Lesson for today, Ezekiel 34, “I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep. I myself will make them lie down...declares the LORD...I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David. And He shall feed them. And be their shepherd.”

There are many more I could recite to you this morning like the parable of the lost sheep, ...But maybe these few will help us paint the picture of what is going on in our gospel for the day.

“When the Son of Man comes in glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate people from one another as a shepherd separates sheep from the goats...”

The Son of Man here is the same shepherd we all will meet on the last day. He will not be a stranger or a different shepherd with a different attitude toward you. Jesus is not one way with you today as the loving and caring shepherd we have learned about, known and cared about, and then at tomorrow at the judgment he becomes the stern judge. No, no, no. He is the same shepherd who sought you out when you were lost, cared for you when you were sick, protected you when in danger, and clothed you with His righteous robe in the waters of Holy Baptism. He knows your faith. He is the same one who you will meet on the last day. Yes, He will separate the sheep from the goats.

Through faith he will place you at His right hand, just as He is at the right hand of the Father. You are His child. You are Jesus' Little Lamb.

Now comes the evidence. Jesus gives us the evidence for His judgment after the separation. The evidence is given after the separation, not before. For Paul writes in, “By grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing. It is a gift of God. Not the result of works. So that no one may boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9

In the last day, as it is today, Faith looks to Jesus. Then Jesus brings up the evidence. Those little things that demonstrate a faith that is active and alive. Now these are acts of love and mercy not to earn God's favor, but acts of love and mercy because you are saved. And the Good Shepherd/Christ the King knows them all. No matter how big or small. He has seen them and experienced them himself. “For just as you have done them to the least of these you have done them to me.”

Of course there are the goats, those without faith. Without a faith that was active and alive. Works without faith, it impossible to please God. Heb 11:6.

But for us whose faith looks to Jesus, there will be a surprise. You will not even remember these actions of love and mercy. That is right there will be no boasting of your accomplishment, because these will be so natural as we breathe air in and out. What has been done in faith has been done for Him and to Him.

But about your sins? I have them, you have them. Sins you know about and sins you don't know about. Big sins and little sins. They are forgiven. They have been taken to the cross. Everyone of them. Your Good Shepherd? Christ the King laid down His life for His sheep. They were buried with Him in the tomb. And when He rose on the Third day those sins stayed in the grave. They are forgiven.

As St Paul wrote in the epistle for the day, "For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first Fruits, then at His coming those who belong to Christ." Which say, you will all be like Him, pure and sinless and glorified. Your body as it was intended to be to live with our Lord forever.

So what other judge do you want? What better judge can anyone ask for?

What is there to fear? For all who are in Christ will have all the judgments taken away. He has put all the enemies under His feet. As well as the last enemy that is to be destroyed is death.

How great and glorious is that. The Judge is my shepherd. I shall not fear.

"Who so Happy as I am. Even now the shepherd's lamb? And when my short life is ended, By His angel host attended, He shall fold me to His breast, There within His arms to rest." Lutheran Worship, Hymn 517, verse 3

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, And of the Holy Spirit.