

**Old Testament Reading:**  
**Ezekiel 34:11–16, 20–24**

<sup>11</sup>“For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. <sup>12</sup>As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. <sup>13</sup>And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. <sup>14</sup>I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. <sup>15</sup>I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. <sup>16</sup>I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice. . . .

<sup>20</sup>“Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: Behold, I, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. <sup>21</sup>Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, <sup>22</sup>I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. <sup>23</sup>And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. <sup>24</sup>And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.”

**Epistle: 1 Corinthians 15:20–28**

<sup>20</sup>But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup>For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup>For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. <sup>23</sup>But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup>Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup>For he must reign until he has put all

his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup>The last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup>For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. <sup>28</sup>When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

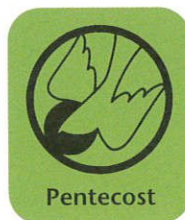
**Holy Gospel: Matthew 25:31–46**

<sup>31</sup>[Jesus said:] “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup>Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup>And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. <sup>34</sup>Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. <sup>35</sup>For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ <sup>37</sup>Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? <sup>38</sup>And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? <sup>39</sup>And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ <sup>40</sup>And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

<sup>41</sup>“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup>For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, <sup>43</sup>I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ <sup>44</sup>Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ <sup>45</sup>Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ <sup>46</sup>And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Inherit the kingdom prepared for you

*Matthew 25:34*



**About the Cover:** As this Church Year comes to a close, we know a new one is on the horizon. Likewise, Jesus' glorious return with the angelic host on the Last Day will be the setting of this life as we know it and the dawn of a new day where we will be welcomed into the inheritance of the Kingdom that has been prepared for us. It has already been secured for those who believe because the judgment against sin has been rendered on Christ's cross. The darkness of Good Friday gave way to the light of Christ's resurrection on Sunday morning.



**St. John's Lutheran Church (LCMS)**  
**8948 N 1900 Ave Geneseo, IL 61254**  
**309-949-2516**

**November 26, 2023      Last Sunday of the Church Year**

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*Office of Matins (Lutheran Service Book, pg. 219)*

**Hymn of Invocation 509 Christ Is Surely Coming**

**Opening Versicles (Common, p. 219)**

***Venite* (p. 220)**

**Psalm 1**

<sup>1</sup>Blessèd is the man  
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;  
<sup>2</sup>**but his delight is in the law of the LORD,**  
**and on his law he meditates day and night.**

<sup>3</sup>He is like a tree  
planted by streams of water  
that yields its fruit in its season,  
and its leaf does not wither.  
In all that he does, he prospers.

<sup>4</sup>**The wicked are not so,**  
**but are like chaff that the wind drives away.**

<sup>5</sup>Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

<sup>6</sup>**for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,**  
**but the way of the wicked will perish.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son**  
**and to the Holy Spirit;**  
**as it was in the beginning,**  
**is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

**Office Hymn 851 Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us**

**Readings (on back of bulletin)**

**Responsory (Common, p. 221)**

**Sermon**

***Te Deum* (p. 223)**

**Prayer for Presenting the Offering**

**Kyrie (p. 227)**

**Collect of the Day**

**P** Eternal God, merciful Father, You have appointed Your Son  
as judge of the living and the dead. Enable us to wait for the  
day of His return with our eyes fixed on the kingdom pre-  
pared for Your own from the foundation of the world;  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with  
You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** **Amen.**

**Prayer of the Church**

*After each petition:*

**P** let us pray to the Lord:

**C** **Lord, have mercy.**

*The prayer concludes:*

**P** ...one God, now and forever.

**C** **Amen.**

**Benediction (p. 228)**

**Closing Hymn 513 The Clouds of Judgment Gather**

*Silent Prayer*

# CHRISTIAN LIVING

A message from Bd. of Stewardship & Evangelism  
November 2023



LOVE! The world often makes love all about how we “feel” towards another, but this emotion can easily come and go which is why we hear people speaking of “falling in or out of love.”

God’s love is different. It is an action. It is a act of will not always coming from good feelings. It is a choice to act in love even when the other does not deserve it.

We first learn something about love within our families. A couple quickly comes to recognize the differences be-

tween them and the annoying actions (or inactions) of their spouse. Will they nurse their frustrations, covet what others (seem to) have and so finally choose adultery, desertion, divorce? Or will they choose to love their spouse by choosing to love, to stay in the marriage, forgiving as God has forgiven them, focusing less on the other’s faults and more on their good qualities,<sup>1</sup> and seeking constructive ways to work though the issues?

If God grants the blessing of children, will they be taught gentleness, kindness and compassion? Will they see their parents working together even in difficult circumstances? Will they experience forgiveness, patience, loving discipline, and encouragement when they do wrong?

It is within these primary relationships that we learn the most about love, hopefully including God’s love. Families are the classroom for teaching and learning what love is and how we are called to love others. There we both study and practice love, living it between spouses, parents and children, amongst siblings, etc. And these first lessons equip and prepare us to go out and love others as God calls us to do as well.

In order that this true godly live would fill us and overflow from us towards, the Spirit of Christ must dwell in our hearts and homes. His presence, influence, and power is effected through public worship, Bible reading, individual and family devotions, prayer, and other virtuous practices which create and promote an unselfish concern for our family members (and beyond), patterned after God’s choosing to love His enemies, sinners, in order to redeem and save them.

***Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 1 John 4:7***

<sup>1</sup> Clearly this does not mean overlooking harmful sins such as abuse, sexual infidelity, or addictions. These must be addressed as what they are: sins that destroy both marriages and saving faith.

## ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH-LCMS

churchoffice@stjohnsgeneseo.org  
Website: [www.stjohnsgeneseo.org](http://www.stjohnsgeneseo.org)  
<https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo>

**HEARING ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE  
HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE**

**Rev. Timothy Nerud** **Pastor**  
309-949-2516 (Office), 612-940-8138 (Cell), 309-949-2517 (Home)

Elder: Carl Freeman

Organist: Gail Tutt

Greeter: Janet Bertso

Videographers: Joel Werling, Nicole Nerud, or Heidi Nerud

**WE PRAY:** Son of Man, before whom all people of all the nations will stand at the Judgment, increase our love for You that our love for all humanity may be deepened and our ministry to every person be accomplished, and grant that we be counted with the faithful when You come to judge the world; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit are one God with dominion over us forever. Amen

### WELCOME TO ALL!

We are anxious to share with you the Christ-centered ministry at St. John's. Our Liturgy follows closely the pattern of Word and Lord's Supper handed down from the ancient Church. It is our hope that you will make the Church's life of prayer your own. If you have difficulty following our order of service, please ask someone sitting near you for assistance. We pray that you will receive rich spiritual blessings from your presence here. May the peace and power of our risen Christ be yours always.

**IF YOU DESIRE**, a visit or call from Pastor Nerud, please contact the church office (309-949-2516).

### OFFICE HOURS

Terri's hours (Monday—Friday) 8 am—12 pm  
Pastor's hours (Monday, Pastor's day off)  
(Tuesday— Friday) please call ahead

**STREAM SERVICES** <https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo/> and on the website: [www.stjohnsgeneseo.org](http://www.stjohnsgeneseo.org).

**DAILY DEVOTIONS FROM LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES** - use this website ([www.lhm.org](http://www.lhm.org)) to have daily devotions sent to your email or phone. You never have to be without God's word.

*All bulletin announcements need to be in the Office by Wednesday mornings.*

## ATTENDANCE LAST SUNDAY

Sunday school— Adult Bible Class—9 Worship—50

### OFFERING

Offering last Sunday	\$10,031.67
Weekly income needed per 2023 Budget	\$4,212.60
Dollar for Missions for October	\$ 104.00

### WEEKLY ACTIVITIES AT ST JOHN'S

Today	8:45 am	SS, Adult/Youth Bible Study
	10:00 am	Divine Worship
Wednesday	5:00 pm	Confirmation class
Saturday	9:00 am	Deck the Halls, decorate for Christmas
Next Sunday	8:45 am	SS, Adult/Youth Bible Study
	10:00 am	Divine Worship/ Holy Communion

*I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD."  
Psalms 122:1*

**MATTHEW 25:44** – "Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?'" With this parable Jesus once again emphasizes that our good works come from who we are, not the other way around. Sheep do sheep works, and goats do goat works. So first things first: if we want to live more faithfully, let us come to Jesus, receive His gifts and ask Him to increase our faith!

**ATTENDANCE BOOK**—We ask everyone attending this morning to sign the red attendance book found at the end of each pew, then pass it back.

**DECK THE HALLS!**- Come join the fun in decorating our church for the Christmas Season THIS SATURDAY, December 2. We will begin at 9 am.

**CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS** will adorn our Altar during the Christmas season. Cost is \$10 if you would like to donate one. Please sign the sheet on the table next to the coat room and pay Terri Hock. We only have several weeks to get our order in (Dec. 1).

**THE GIVING TREE**—Take an ornament (or several) and follow the directions on the back of the ornament.

**CHRISTIAN LIVING**—Matthew 25:31-46: The parable of the sheep and the goats does not put an emphasis on works, but instead, it puts them in their proper perspective. Here is the greatest perk for serving the Lord. With every task and every deed and with every person, we have the opportunity to meet Christ in that person and through that deed. So, how do we wait for Judgment Day? With certainty in His pronouncement of our sins forgiven, with certainty of receiving inheritance that our compassionate Judge has prepared us for eternity, and with certainty that every day, every task, every vocation has significance to God and to us, because unbelieving souls are saved through the power of the Holy Spirit and believing souls meet Christ as they wait.

**2024 Wall Calendars**—Hillcrest Home would be very happy to receive your extra 2024 wall calendars to hang in their patients' rooms. Please place them in the tray on the table by the coat room. Thank you!

**DOLLAR FOR MISSIONS:** A Dollar for Missions gathers many small gifts – one dollar at a time! – to add up to a big impact for the spread of the saving Gospel of Christ. The current Dollars for Missions Project is to raise \$20k for stipends to pastors to begin visiting four new prisons or jails in 2024.

**ALTAR FLOWERS**—The **2023 Flower Chart is now on the bulletin board next to the restrooms.** Cost for weekly flowers are \$30 for two arrangements. We greatly appreciate those who help with providing flowers for Sunday worship services. **Please sign up for a Sunday.**

### **PRAYER MINISTRY**

*Give thanks as you pray:*

**MISSION**—*Thank God for His Son Jesus Christ and for the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ.* Rejoice that Christ's death has purchased and won you from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil.

**ST JOHN'S—Mr. & Mrs. John Thompson**—We offer before You our common request for the well-being of Your church throughout the world that it may be so guided and governed by Your good Spirit that all who profess themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth and hold the faith in unity of spirit in the bond of peace, and the righteousness of life. Specifically, we pray for John and Kindra ask Your blessings upon them.

**ST. JOHN'S FAMILY**—O Lord, You are the great Physician of soul and body. We pray that You would show mercy to Your servants:

Elizabeth Bjork	Betty Firch	Wanda Rahn
Paula Chapa	Arlyn Helke	Drew Schillinger
Jim Dahl	Lynne Johnson	Marilyn Woods
Jessica Johnson	Aaron Raschke	Carolyn Werner

**Anthony/Sami Sedotto** (2022/2023 Adopted seminary student)

**Don Eggers** ( son of friend of Marilyn Woods)

**Jodi Martins** (daughter of Gary & Darla Johns)

**Jon/Anita Clausing** (missionaries in Kenya)

**Marilyn Potts** (wife of Cal Potts, former St. John Laborer for Christ)

**Bruce & Debbie Bley** (sister & brother-in-law of Cathy Schillinger)

**Laurie Sanford** (sister of Jan Dahl)

**Mike Erdman** (nephew of Bob Erdman)

**Shandel Loenser** (wife of Gabe Loenser)

**Paul Werner** (brother of Dan Werner)

**Jim DeFauw** (son of Joyce DeFauw)

**Scott Wilson** (Great nephew of Darla Johns)

**MILITARY**—We pray for those serving in our military and their families:

**Mandy/Richard Davila** (daughter/son-in-law of Linda Aper)

**Luke/Nicole Thompson** (son/daughter-in-law of John/Kindra Thompson)

**Karl Flynn** (son of Mr/Mrs Paul Flynn)

**Casey Powers Jr.** (step son of Lisa Powers)

**Brittany Loenser** (daughter of Gabe Loenser)

**Rylie Hallendorff** (grand-daughter of Carolyn & Dan Werner)

### **LUTHERANS FOR LIFE**

“Being For Life is right in line with God’s plan of creation! YOU are the missing element that is needed! Don’t be satisfied to sit back and wait because now is the time! Don’t stop praying as you ponder your next step. Ask God for His guidance and be ready for more than you asked for, as we have a loving and merciful God who loves life. Please consider being a part of a life-affirming ministry in your congregation. Help protect lives and serve God in this special calling.” *Virginia Flo, Lutherans For Life – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • [lutheransforlife.org](http://lutheransforlife.org)*



## **Enchilada Sale Fundraiser! \$20 per dozen**

**2 Flavors: Chicken or Beef**

**SATURDAY DECEMBER 9TH, 2023**

**PICK UP ORDERS: 1-2PM**

**LOCATION:**

**CHRIST THE KING LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**1301 19TH ST. EAST MOLINE, IL**

**50 dozens available - Order by 11/30/23**

**Jose Nunez (309) 373-1788**

Proceeds will go towards  
Christ the King Lutheran Church

Last Sunday of the Church Year

November 26, 2023

Text: Matthew 25:1-13 (Gospel Reading)

Other Texts: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24 (Old Testament Reading); 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 (Epistle)

### **“Truths About Sheep and Goats”**

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!

Today we celebrate the Last Sunday of the Church Year, which in some Christian traditions is known as Christ the King Sunday.<sup>i</sup> Whether we give it a special title or not,<sup>ii</sup> the focus continues the theme of the last few Sundays: the visible return of Christ Jesus in His heavenly glory, the bodily resurrection of all people (which includes the changing of the bodies of those who are still alive on the Last Day<sup>iii</sup>), the end of this creation, the final judgment of the living and the dead, and the entrance of all people, body and soul, into eternity as determined by the King’s righteous judgment. So let us meditate upon what our Lord says in today’s Gospel.

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.”<sup>iv</sup>

Right after the risen Jesus ascended into heaven, the angels said to the gawking disciples, “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”<sup>v</sup> Today’s text refers to His return. It is *the* Day, the day of reckoning, the day of judgment, the Lord’s Day. It is when He fully consummates all His promises, both to save His elect children as well as to execute His vengeance upon His enemies. The specific date of His return is unknown and unknowable. But it is certain, inevitable, and every day it is one day closer, as indicated by the many signs of its increasing nearness become increasingly obvious.

On this day, at the King’s command, His army of holy angels shall gather “all the nations” before Him.<sup>vi</sup> So it is clear that no one, neither a people group nor any individual, will escape judgment. Just as He came the first time to be the Savior of all people, so He will come the second time to be the Judge of all people. And the judgment is not some long, drawn out process. The angels bring mankind before the King and by divine omniscience and omnipotence the Lord Christ immediately separates them to either His left or His right. And it is beyond any question that there are only two groups of people. Before the throne of the King there are no social, ethnic, or cultural distinctions. There is no preference for either the rich or the poor. There is no third, neutral, group. One is either a goat who cannot escape the King, though that is their every desire, or a sheep who has absolutely no desire at all to escape from their saving King.

Jesus speaks to all, first to those on His right, then to the ones on His left. But because He uses acts of mercy, works either done or not done to the least of His brethren, to show the justice of His judgment, we will consider this closer as there are many false explanations of His words.

The first thing is the teaching that Jesus’ brothers are needy people in general and that those who help them are thereby the sheep for they served Jesus and those who didn’t help them are the

goats who failed to serve Jesus. Now Scripture, both testaments, does teach that we are to help those in need; after all, we are to love even our enemies! But this understanding of Jesus' words cannot stand based upon Scripture as a whole, or even this text.

Why? To begin, it absolutely contradicts the most important teachings of Scripture. First, the Law of God which says no one is righteous by their own works, nor could they ever be saved by them.<sup>vii</sup> Second, it denies the very Gospel itself; that condemned sinners are saved not by their works, but are declared righteous by faith in *the completed work of Christ*, His life, death and resurrection as our substitute under God's Law.<sup>viii</sup>

Of course works of love are to be done, but they can only follow the most important thing, which is faith in the Son whom the Father has sent.<sup>ix</sup> Of course, faith is to be active in love, is to bear fruit loving the neighbor as oneself, and without such is dead,<sup>x</sup> but works without faith in Christ crucified and risen as Savior do not count as without faith it is impossible to please God.<sup>xi</sup> Thus being "a good person" *cannot* save anyone since, as Jesus said, God alone is good, so only those who receive His righteousness through faith in Christ are good in His eyes.<sup>xii</sup>

That settles the issue, but it is still important to know who Jesus' brothers are. And nowhere in Scripture does Jesus identify Himself with the poor and needy in general, declaring them His brothers or true family. On the contrary, Jesus actually declares who they are saying, "For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."<sup>xiii</sup> And since we just heard that to do the will of the Father means, first and foremost, to have faith in Jesus, it becomes clear that those to whom Jesus refers as His brothers have to be *Christians*, those who do the Father's will by confessing Jesus as God, Lord, and Savior. So St. Paul's exhortation is not surprising, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, *and especially to those who are of the household of faith.*"<sup>xiv</sup> The apostle simply repeats his Lord who called him!

A final biblical teaching against the belief that those who do good things to the needy are automatically the sheep is that numerous other parts of the Bible mention other things as necessary, so we must not take the list here as all inclusive. For faith first of all includes turning from sin, as the idea that the evil I commit is counteracted by the good I do is nothing less than absolute paganism and has no place amongst Christians. One cannot willingly continue in sin and somehow still be saved by doing some good things! More, the list of the fruit of the Spirit and our callings in our various vocations include much more than just these few acts of love that Jesus mentions. Consequently, for all these reasons it is obvious that one is a sheep through repentance and faith in Christ, which are shown to be genuine by good works, and not by any works without faith since such people cannot do a single good work and so are the goats.

Another point to consider is that it is sometimes stated that the believers were completely surprised that they had any good works and this is then used to prove that we should not think about doing good works since they will just automatically come. Of course, if we are doing good works only for a reward we are not Christians, but mercenaries! It is to such people that Jesus rightly warns that whatever thanks they get here on earth is the only reward they will get, for they "will have no reward from [their] Father who is in heaven."<sup>xv</sup> And it is true that they did not have a list of their works ready to whip out and remind the King with.

But what surprised them was not so much that they had done works, but Jesus saying that *He* was the recipient of them. So far from, “Don’t think about doing good works,” Jesus’ mysterious, yet lovely words, “as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me”<sup>xvi</sup> *actually encourages us* to do works of love and mercy towards our fellow believers.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world... Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”<sup>xvii</sup>

Hear how Jesus puts heaven and hell as well as their eternal nature in parallel. This destroys any idea that only heaven exists, or that heaven lasts forever but hell doesn’t. Such might sound nice, but so do all of Satan’s lies, *every one of which leads us away from Christ!*

Those on the right are blessed by Jesus’ Father for they are the elect, receiving from His Holy Spirit every good gift by which they became and remained His children, the Word and Sacraments, contrition, faith, repentance, forgiveness of sins, new life, perseverance in saving faith unto the end. Now these children, spiritually speaking, come of age, inheriting the kingdom prepared for them before the creation first came into existence, fully enjoying the visible manifestation of their being kings and priests unto God. They hear the invitation, “Come,” and so enter the blessedness of the life of the world to come, children coming to their Father’s home.

But those on the left do not hear “Come,” but “Be gone!” They are not cursed by the Father, for it is they who despised His Word, resisted His Spirit’s working, and so, ultimately, rejected Jesus and His salvation. Perhaps they did such their whole life, perhaps they were believers who later fell away. Either way, they are cast into the eternal fire that was prepared, not for them, but for the devil and his angels. But since they are not children of the Heavenly Father, but have shown themselves to be children of the devil, they too go to their “father’s home.”

When Jesus returns in glory, He will separate the sheep, that is, true Christians whose names are in the Lamb’s book of life,<sup>xviii</sup> from the hypocrites, false Christians, outwardly noble unbelievers, openly vile sinners and every other goat as well. Believers will be vindicated, unbelievers will be condemned. The books recording the works will then be opened.<sup>xix</sup>

To believers, who have no sins since they have been washed away in Christ’s precious blood, degrees of glory will be awarded based upon their faithfulness to Christ’s Word, the good works they did, especially towards their fellow believers, forgiving as they have been forgiven, the suffering they patiently endured, the crosses they bore for His sake. So also, to unbelievers who have no good works but only sins, degrees of torment will be decided based upon whether they heard the Word and rejected it, were believers who fell away, and what sins they committed, what harm they caused, especially lack of love towards, and persecution of believers.

Dear Christians, this Day will come; it is even now coming. So even as we trust in being God’s sheep through grace, may we strive to live as His people so that we do not lose His grace, but instead glorify it by our lives bringing honor to our Triune God. May He make it so. Amen!



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<sup>i</sup> Includes Roman Catholic, Anglican, some Reformed, and some Lutheran Churches. E.g. it is an alternate option for the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church (WELS).

<sup>ii</sup> I, personally, wish we did for whatever it's worth.

<sup>iii</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:51.

<sup>iv</sup> Matthew 25:31-33. All quotes are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

<sup>v</sup> Acts 1:11.

<sup>vi</sup> We see the angels carrying out this mission, for example, in the Parable of the Weeds, Matthew 13:41 and the Parable of the Net, Matthew 13:49-50.

<sup>vii</sup> Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:10; 23.

<sup>viii</sup> John 3:16; Romans 1:16-17; 3:21-31; Ephesians 2:8-9.

<sup>ix</sup> Cf. John 3:16; 6:29.

<sup>x</sup> Galatians 5:6, 22; Luke 3:8; James 2:17, 26.

<sup>xi</sup> Hebrews 11:6.

<sup>xii</sup> Luke 18:19; Jeremiah 23:6.

<sup>xiii</sup> Matthew 12:50.

<sup>xiv</sup> Galatians 6:10 (*emphasis mine*).

<sup>xv</sup> Matthew 6:1b. Cf. Matthew 6:2b.

<sup>xvi</sup> Matthew 25:40.

<sup>xvii</sup> Matthew 25:34, 41.

<sup>xviii</sup> Revelation 20:12, 15.

<sup>xix</sup> Revelation 20:12.

**Last Sunday of the Church Year (Proper 29A)**  
**26 November 2023**

**Presentation of the Offering**

Heavenly Father, give us the needed health, abilities, and opportunities to make a living that supports ourselves and our families. Keep our hearts clear of covetousness lest we desire more than we need or that is good for us. Do not allow us to be wasteful on the one hand or greedy and selfish on the other, but help us be wise and faithful stewards who use the money and goods You provide us in ways that please You. Grant us Your grace to praise You with our whole lives, which includes these offerings that we are presenting today. May they be thoughtfully, bountifully, and cheerfully given. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Collect of the Day**

Eternal God, merciful Father, You have appointed Your Son as judge of the living and the dead. Enable us to wait for the day of His return with our eyes fixed on the kingdom prepared for Your own from the foundation of the world; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Prayer of the Church—Ektene Form**

For the people of God's pasture, gathered from all nations, that they may gladly feast upon His riches in the Means of Grace and declare His praises to all who will hear, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For God's pastors, that through their service in His Word, our Good Shepherd would be pleased continually to seek the lost, bring back the strayed, correct the erring, bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For our homes, that the Holy Spirit would bless parents to train their children with wisdom and love; and that as the Son gladly subjects Himself to the Father, so God would bless children to gladly submit to their parents, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those in civil authority, that God would sustain them in their governance until, on the Last Day, this world's powers pass away, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all in need of help and healing, including Elizabeth, Bruce, Debbie, Paula, Jim, Jim, Don, Michael, Betty, Arlyn, Jessica, Lynne, Shandel, Jodi, Marilyn, Wanda, Aaron, Laurie, Drew, Steve, Carolyn, Paul, Carolyn, Scott, and Marilyn, that God would hold not His peace at their tears, but deliver them from their transgressions, preserve them in faith, and bring healing and deliverance according to His gracious will, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For John and Kindra Thompson, that our heavenly Father would bless them in body and soul with all things needful for this life and eternity. let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the saints who have fallen asleep in Jesus, let us give thanks to the Lord; and that God would strengthen our conviction that death is defeated so that we would confidently and eagerly look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Almighty God, You have prepared Your kingdom for us from the foundation of the world. Preserve us in faith and love throughout our days, that we may care for Your servants and our neighbors with compassion and joy, looking toward that day when the Son of Man comes in His glory; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**