

FAITH @ HOME

Week of November 22, 2020

Last Sunday after Pentecost (Christ the King)

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

REFLECT: When I think of kings, I usually think of the royal people who have crowns, fancy clothes, enjoy a lot of tea parties, and have a castle full of helpers. I wonder what you think a king looks like? What do you think a king does?

Did you know the Church calls this Sunday Christ the King? Christians believe Jesus is a king! Jesus is always surprising us, though, because Jesus is not the kind of king who lives in a fancy castle with servants. Instead, King Jesus is a helper. The Bible says Jesus is the kind of king who behaves more like a shepherd who spends time outside taking care of sheep. A shepherd finds sheep who get lost, keeps them safe from all kinds of danger, shows them good grass to eat, and keeps them cool by showing them to water.

From David (a shepherd boy who grew up to be the king of Israel) to Jesus (who is called both the Good Shepherd and the King of Kings), The Bible has a long story of teaching us that God cares for people like a shepherd cares for sheep, and God wants us to care for each other, too.

RESPOND: Children have an amazing capacity to see the needs of others, as well as simple ways to care. Sit down together and have an intentional conversation about things you notice people need and come up with simple, caring ways to help. Make a list and set a goal to do a few of the things on the list this week. Let the small children in your life take the lead. You might be surprised in the ways Jesus shows up in what they notice.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MICHELLE BULLOCK



Michelle Bullock serves as Rector at St. Peter's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church in Swansboro, NC. She has a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education (Appalachian State University) and Master's of Divinity (Duke Divinity School) and has a background in youth and children's ministry, and formerly served as a school chaplain. She and her husband have two daughters in preschool and elementary school. You can follow Michelle on her website at revbullock.com.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Matthew 25:31-46

REFLECT: Sometimes Jesus tells us parables, stories where we have to figure out the meaning. He uses sheep and mustard seeds and lost coins as ways for us to learn how we should live as Christians. In this passage from the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus gets straight to the point and tells us exactly how we should care for others: We should feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, give clothing to those who need it, take care of the sick, and visit those in prison. It seems like Jesus is asking us to do a lot! But all of these instructions have one thing in common: we are to care for those who are less fortunate. If someone is hungry or thirsty, we help. If someone is lonely or sick, we help. Jesus isn't telling us to do all these things every day, all day. We'd be worn out! But he is telling us to take every opportunity to help others, particularly those who are going through a rough time. When we do this, when we help others, we are helping Jesus, and that is a tremendous honor indeed.

RESPOND: As a household, talk about one specific way you can respond to this scripture passage. You might decide to help at a soup kitchen during the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday or go through your closets and donate items to a shelter. Maybe you can decorate pumpkins and place them on the porch of some of your older neighbors, people who can't get out much. Make a plan to act on this verse. Then decide if you want to make this a regular occurrence. Be ready to meet Jesus in the people you serve!

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: RICHELLE THOMPSON



Richelle Thompson lives in the beautiful bluegrass of Kentucky, near Cincinnati, with her husband, their two children, a horse, a cat, and two dogs. She serves as the deputy director and managing editor of Forward Movement, a ministry of the Episcopal Church and publisher of the daily devotional, *Forward Day by Day*.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Matthew 25:31-46

REFLECT: In this lesson from Matthew, we find Jesus separating those on his right hand (sheep) for the kingdom of God and those on his left hand (goats) for the fires below. Why the comparison of sheep and goats? Let's look at what we know about sheep and goats. Sheep are gentle, quiet, and easily led animals (think of the parable of the good shepherd). Goats, on the other hand, are pushy, self-sufficient, and headstrong. It is the sheep that acted charitably, giving food, drink, and clothing to the needy. The goats showed no mercy. As followers of Christ (the sheep), we are asked to treat others with kindness, serving them as if they were serving Christ Himself.

RESPOND: In this passage, we discover that Jesus sees how we live our lives now which is connected to our lives after we die. When we choose to do charitable acts, are we doing them for the right reasons? Are we really serving from our hearts?

Also, we could read this story and think of ourselves as the people who need help. Because sometimes, we do need help. Have you ever been hungry or thirsty or felt alone in a new place? Have you ever been the newbie at school or church? Dare to be that stranger and remember how it feels to be new and alone. This week, welcome those around you and reach out to your neighbors. Take care of those whom you meet but also remember it's okay to need help sometimes, too.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: LAUREN WAINWRIGHT



Lauren Wainwright currently serves as the Director of Student Ministries at Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in Dallas, TX. She has worked with large and small churches across several dioceses over the past 13 years, serving in youth ministry. Lauren is originally from Hattiesburg, Mississippi where she first began her call to ministry but has called Dallas home for the past 4 years. In her free time, she enjoys reading, Netflix watching, and spending time with her 2 dogs at home.

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

REFLECT: I find myself resting assured knowing that we have a God who loves us so much, that God would rescue us from our pain and bring us healing; that God would bring us from darkness into light, that God would lift us out of fear, and restore us to a place of peace and hope. This parable reminds us that we not only have a God that promises us such things, but who created us to be in such an image. People in our very midst hunger to be seen by you. Who haven't you seen? People in our towns, desire to be guided to a community with a loving embrace. Where can you help form community? People are in need to be strengthened in spirit, healed from oppression, and given a glimpse of justice. How might you be the stranger, who stops and listens to such a cry? I find myself resting assured knowing that we have a Savior in Christ: I don't need to be that. But I also find myself resting assured that there are disciples who reflect such a saving embrace; disciples, like you.

RESPOND: In my household, it was always a practice on Thanksgiving to go around the table and to say not only what we are thankful for, but also for whom we are thankful. Our prayers of thanksgiving sometimes get limited to only a season or minimized by resting in knowing that God is aware (that we don't always speak them aloud). But, why don't we cry aloud our prayers of gratitude? Take the time this day, or this week, to share your prayers of thanksgiving, and gratitude's to those around you.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: CHRISTOPHER DECATUR



The Rev. Christopher Decatur is the Deacon in Charge at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Cleveland, Ohio. He is a graduate of Virginia Theological Seminary. Prior to seminary, Chris served at Trinity Cathedral in Cleveland, OH as the Associate Minister for Children, Youth, Family, Young Adult and Campus Ministries. Chris also has served as "The Chair of The Subcommittee for Racial Reconciliation and Justice for The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music." Chris has an undergraduate degree in Comparative Religion from Cleveland State University and years of studies and practicing of Early Childhood Education at both CSU and as a student at The Catholic University of America.

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