

Church of the Divine Love
LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
NOVEMBER 26, 2023 10:15 AM
HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn **#494 – Crown him with many crowns**

Opening Acclamation page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (sung) page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24**

Psalm 95:1-7a

Second Lesson: **Ephesians 1:15-23**

Gradual Hymn **#492 – Sing, ye faithful, sing with gladness**

Gospel: **Matthew 25:31-46**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze (printed on insert)

The Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form VI page 392

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn **#460 – Alleluia! sing to Jesus!**

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

Eucharistic Prayer A	page 361
Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal)	page 367
Hymn during Consecration printed on insert	
The Lord's Prayer	page 364
The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer	page 337
The Communion of the People	
Communion Hymn #616 – Hail to the Lord's Anointed	
Post Communion Prayer	page 365
Prayer for Peace – on insert	
Prayer of St. Francis	page 833
Dismissal Hymn #555 – Lead on, O King eternal	
Dismissal	

Sermon Sunday November 26, 2023

Ezekiel 34:11-16,20-24; Psalm 95:1-7; Ephesians 1:15-23; Matthew 25:31-46.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today we explore a powerful passage of scripture found in Matthew 25:31-46. This passage contains Jesus' teachings on the final judgment when He separates the sheep from the goats. It challenges us to examine how we serve Christ by serving others in our daily lives. Let us delve into the significance of this passage and how it calls us to live a life of compassion and love.

Jesus begins by describing the scene of His second coming when all nations will be gathered before Him. He distinguishes between the sheep and the goats, symbolizing righteous and unrighteous individuals. This analogy reminds us of the shepherding culture, emphasizing the responsibility we have to care for one another. The separation highlights the importance of our actions and attitudes towards the least of these. In this portion of the passage, Jesus reveals that the righteous are those who have shown compassion and love to the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, and imprisoned. Surprisingly, they were unaware that they were serving Christ Himself through their acts of kindness. Jesus teaches that when we serve others, especially the marginalized and vulnerable, we are serving Him. He identifies with the needy, and our response to them reflects our devotion to Him.

Conversely, Jesus speaks of those who neglected to show compassion and love to their fellow human beings. He vividly portrays their fate as eternal punishment. They failed to recognize Christ in the least of these and consequently overlooked opportunities to serve Him. Their disregard for others demonstrates a lack of genuine faith and exposes a heart disconnected from the love and compassion of Christ. Jesus concludes this passage by highlighting the everlasting consequences of our actions. Those who show kindness and compassion will receive eternal life, while those who neglect others will face eternal punishment. This serves as a call to action for believers to prioritize serving Christ through serving others. It compels us to examine our hearts and our relationship with Jesus, challenging us to align our actions with our faith.

“God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world,” Jesus says, “but in order that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:17). “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). What do we do with those verses in light of today’s gospel? I wonder if we’ve misunderstood what’s happening when Jesus separates. Maybe the separation Jesus makes doesn’t look a thing like the separations we usually make. Maybe the purpose of the separation Jesus makes is the exact opposite of the purpose for which we often make separations. What if, for Jesus, separation is not the same as exclusion? What if badness is not an obstacle to being in the kingdom but neither is goodness a prerequisite? After all, both groups in today’s gospel ask Jesus the same question, “Lord when was it that we saw you?” Neither had a clue about what they were doing, they just had different ways of being.

Have you ever been around a child who was learning and practicing the word no? We call it the terrible twos but what’s really going on? It’s about separation. That little one is discovering some autonomy, individuality, and a new life. And it doesn’t end there. Do you remember the struggles, arguments, and difficulties of the adolescent years? It was a time of separating from parental authority, social norms, and beginning to discover our place in the world. Think about the day you or your child left home to go to school, start work, get married. That’s more separation and it was about creating a new life and a new way of being. The difficulty of those years is not so much about the two-year-old, adolescent, or young adult being wrong or bad, but a sign that separating, growing up, and claiming the fullness of our life is hard and often painful work, at any age, at every age. And it never ends. It’s an ongoing process of seeking to create and discover for ourselves life and more life. Every choice we make involves a separation. The only question is whether that separation is giving life or taking life. That’s the difference between the sheep and the goats.

When have you had to separate yourself from another person or relationship, destructive patterns or behaviors, your work, busyness, fear, hatred, anger, resentment, disappointment in order to grow up, recover yourself, and let new life arise? When have you made a separation that was actually an exclusion and diminishment of life for yourself or another? Think about the creation story in Genesis and the necessity of separation. God separated light from darkness, the waters above the dome from the waters beneath the dome, the seas from the dry land, day from night. God wasn’t excluding, God was creating. Separation is at the center of creation and life. And what if that’s exactly what Jesus is doing in today’s

gospel, separating in order to bring about a new creation, a new life, a new way of being, in you and me? It's not about sheep or goats, but about sheep and goats.

I want us to be careful here. Eternal is not about a length of time. It is a quality of God, a way of being. So, when we speak of eternal life, we're speaking about the divine life. And when we speak of eternal fire, we're speaking about the divine fire. Both eternal life and eternal fire are God's. It's not as if eternal life is with God and eternal fire is apart from God. One is not an entrance to the kingdom and the other an exclusion from the kingdom. Both are within and aspects of the kingdom of God. This eternal fire lets us see ourselves and others in a new light – in the light of compassion, mercy, justice, forgiveness, love. It is a purifying and refining fire, burning the dross of our life and revealing the gold that is already and always has been within us. The eternal fire is neither destructive nor exclusionary, but transformative and creative. It's like when I was a kid and put in time out. I was told to go sit on my bed and think about what I had done or said. My parents weren't seeking retribution, but reformation. They didn't want something from me, they wanted me. I was being separated but not excluded. The only reason for that separation was so that I might come back to my parents and sister with a new way of being, seeing, listening, relating, loving.

The fire of time out was about my growing up and taking my place in the family, a place I had never lost. And I think that's what's happening in today's gospel for the goats and the goat-like parts of your life and my life. Let's not deny, ignore, or run from the goat-like parts of our life. They are always places of hope, growth, new possibilities, and more life. The separation Jesus makes is never final, always conditional, and in anticipation of our returning to ourselves and one another with new life, more life.

This Gospel provides us with a sobering reminder of our responsibility to serve Christ by serving others. Our faith must be manifested in our actions, as we recognize the inherent value and dignity of every person. In our service, we demonstrate the love and compassion of Jesus, living out the gospel message. Let us respond to this call, embracing a lifestyle of compassion, and continue to be faithful to our Savior by caring for the least of these. May our lives be a testament to His love and may we hear the words of Jesus, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me." **Amen.**

There are envelopes containing stewardship letters and pledge cards. If you did not receive one last week, please take one. Return by December 3rd.

LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS	(also on zoom)
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MONDAY	8:30 AM	AA MEETING	
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WEDNESDAY	7:00 PM	AL-ANON MEETING	
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THURSDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP CHRISTMAS SALE	
	8:30 AM	AA MEETING	

SAURDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP CHRISTMAS SALE	
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1 ADVENT	10:15AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS	(also on zoom)
	11:15 AM	VESTRY MEETING	

	Today	Next Week
Eucharistic Minister	Jess Berbeck	Jess Berbeck
Coffee Hour	Nolans	Jess Berbeck

SUPPORT THE FOOD PANTRY – DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Loving God, comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Especially we remember before you:

Grace Schinella	Lourdes S.	Jess
Bob Curley	Michael & Family	Art
Chris Dickson	Kate Jones	Deb P.
Michael Echevarria	John Rocco	Judy
Christopher	Warren	Kristen
Charlotte H.	Bernie Walther	Celeste
Mo	Phil Ryder	Carolyn
Anthony Paribello	Barbara Curran	Del
Robert Hosey	Robert Sweat	Aidan
Sally & Roger	Sophia	Carol K.
Mary & Family	Ciara	Dennis L.
Nathan Treadwell	Vincent	
Jean Estinvil Quatorze	Jean Wildy Nicolas	

All people and countries suffering from violence, hatred and natural disasters.

Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them. Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen.

Prayer before Worship

Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it, the spirit of grace. Deliver us, when we draw near to you, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,
Lay my life before you,
How I love you.

(Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus and third verse starting with Spirit.)

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions and glory, now and for ever. Amen

