

**Sermon Title:** “Homecoming King”

**November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 – Christ the King Sunday**

**Text:** Ezekiel 34



**Theme:** No matter how difficult life is, God will personally seek you out and bring you home.

**What’s in it for me?**

**Sermon Text:**

Grace and Peace to you from our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today is the last day of the Church year, known as Christ the King Sunday. Next Sunday, we will begin the season of Advent and begin our preparation for Christ’s birth, but this Sunday, we celebrate Christ’s triumphal return. Obviously, this is something we look forward as something that is happening at some point in the future, so what does God want us to know about Christ’s return?

In our Old Testament Text, the Prophet Ezekiel tells us that God will personally set out and seek His lost sheep. The shepherds of Israel failed to be faithful and true to God’s Word, and so, God will do it Himself. God promises that He will rescue all of His lost sheep from all peoples, not just Israel. God is going to bring them into a safe place that He has prepared for them. God will feed His gathered flock, and they will find rest. God will rescue the injured and bring them to a place of safety. God’s flock will no longer be the prey of the world. Who is going to do all of this? God. The Lord Himself has spoken and He will do this.

So, we have a brief summary of the text, but what does this mean for us? First of all, no matter what your background, no matter when you came to faith, no matter how much you put in the offering plate or how many Church activities you helped organize, when Jesus returns, He will seek you out and bring you home. When you were Baptized into the faith, you became part of God’s flock, and even though we have all gone astray from time to time, Jesus still loves us and He will still call us home. God knew that there was no way you could free yourself from your sin, so Jesus personally paid the price for it. There is no reason to try to hide from Jesus, or not come to Him when He calls. We have all said, thought, and done some pretty rotten things in this world, that you’re probably not very proud of, but Jesus paid for those sins, too. I know I sound like a broken record, but Jesus paid the price for your sin, so learn to forgive yourself and others.

Jesus also promises to “bind up the injured and strengthen the weak.” I know we are all suffering due to Covid-19 and the associated Pandemic fatigue, but there are also those among you that

are suffering additional hardships. Some are suffering due to medical conditions, others post-traumatic stress disorder, and yet others are suffering financial hardships. Some of your brothers and sisters are suffering from one or more of these in addition to Pandemic Fatigue and Covid-19. Then, some of your brothers and sisters are suffering persecution for their faith. There are places in this world, where our brothers and sisters risk their lives to come together and worship, risks that makes Governor Inslee's ban on congregational singing look rather insignificant. Still, we have faced less severe and more subtle persecution for quite sometime. No matter the type of suffering and no matter the severity, it will all be set right when Jesus returns. He will ensure nobody will be able to hurt us anymore. No more pandemic. Just pure unadulterated joy with Jesus and your Christian brothers and sisters.

Our textual selection leaves out a few important verses regarding our treatment of each other, but don't worry too badly, because Jesus says something very similar in our Gospel for today. While Jesus died for our sins and has completely forgiven us for them, He does expect a response out of us. As Martin Luther once said, "God does not need our good works, but our neighbor does." Jesus expects us to show the same care and love to our neighbors that He has shown to us. During this pandemic, we really have to guard against non-Christlike behavior. While many of us under normal conditions have no problem walking up to greet a visitor who showed up for Church or to hug a friend at the supermarket, etc., but under these stressful conditions, it's easy to look at other people as if they are the coronavirus themselves. Homeless and domestic violence shelters are also operating on reduced capacity and services. Many organizations are limiting volunteer involvement and services due to Covid-19. I get that we need to take reasonable precautions to keep everyone safe, including ourselves, but I have to ask, is this really what Jesus has in mind? There are ways when we can keep ourselves safe and still attend to Jesus' flock. We can start with prayer, phone calls, and listening. Be that friend and show that you care. There are a lot of people who attempt suicide because they are convinced that nobody cares about them. The government will meet tomorrow to set the priority of the upcoming vaccine. I know there are a lot of people who will want to be at the front of the line to receive it, but we need to remember to love each other and wait our turn.

These latest restrictions imposed by Governor Inslee are a reminder of the hardships we face in order to remain faithful and support one another. This year has been especially trying, given that we have been going through a call process at the same time as getting a taste of what our brothers and sisters in Christ face in much of the rest of the world. David Hinz' son Joel talked to us about the steps that He had to go through to worship while he was stationed in Pakistan, and Adam Daugherty talked about the restrictions on worship he faced while in China. Many of our shut-ins are confined to care facilities without the ability to have visitors. They have been turned into expensive prisons for many, and

now too many are facing outbreaks of Covid-19 brought in by some unsuspecting employee. No matter where we find ourselves, we live in stressful times. It can seem like everything is stacked against us.

If you can remember only one thing from our time together this year, remember this; Jesus loves you very much and you are not alone in your struggles. Jesus is with you every step of the way, and so are we. We are your family in Christ, and we are here for you too. Yes, like many families we have our quirks, and we fight on occasion, but we come together to support one another when it counts. Jesus is the finisher and refiner of our faith. He is returning to set everything right. This evil that we encounter doesn't stand a chance against King Jesus. Jesus' name means, "The Lord Saves," and He does just that. No more tears, no more suffering, no more hardships, no more coronavirus, no more cancer. It will be just King Jesus and His flock, so run that race with endurance. Jesus is our Homecoming King. He's coming soon and He's got a place for each and every one of us.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

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Various Authors. *The Lutheran Study Bible*. Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.