

We Are Waiting For A King

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INI - SDG

Ezekiel 34:11-17, 20-24 ¹¹ `For thus says the Lord GOD: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. ¹² "As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. ¹³ "And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. ¹⁴ "I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ "I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says the Lord GOD. ¹⁶ "I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment." ¹⁷ `And *as for* you, O My flock, thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats. ²⁰ `Therefore thus says the Lord GOD to them: "Behold, I Myself will judge between the fat and the lean sheep. ²¹ "Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad, ²² "therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. ²³ "I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them-- My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴ "And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

When Israel first entered the land of Canaan, God made them a promise. He would be their king. Fast forward four hundred years, the people are sick of Judges and demand an earthly king. God warned the people that it is not a good thing they asked. He warned them that kings would be selfish, greedy, lustful, ignorant, foolish and idolaters. They will take your best women, and your taxes, and your young men for their armies. Even worst they would lead you to follow foreign gods. Despite God's warning the Israelites insisted, they wanted a king.

Another four hundred years later it was clear that God was right. There were some good kings but many of them had done wicked things and had encouraged the Israelites to follow false Gods.

Even though God had warned the Israelites that their kings would do this, still God condemns these kings. In the first part of Ezekiel 34 we read.

Ezekiel 34:2 **Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?**

God says that it is because the shepherds, the rulers of Israel, did not lead the people. This is why His people are scattered among the nations. It was a judgement on their sinfulness, but their sinfulness was a result of their leadership.

Therefore, what does God promise to do?

Ezekiel 34:22-23 22 "therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. 23 "I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them-- My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd.

Because the rulers of God's people failed so utterly God himself will choose/anoint a true shepherd, a true king and he will do what all the others failed. He will gather all of God's people and lead them.

Two weeks ago, we talked about the parable of the virgins. We need to be ready, always waiting for Christ's coming.

Last week we talked about the parable of the talents. We discussed what we ought to be doing while we wait for His coming.

Today the question is what are we waiting for? The answer that God gives in both the gospel and the sermon text is that we are waiting for the true king.

Christ means anointed or chosen. We are waiting for Christ the King. The king chosen by God.

Our situation isn't that much better than the Israelites. Our forefathers didn't trust kings. They decided to elect judges and legislators and presidents. This worked out better than having a king. But it still leaves a lot to be desired. Our leaders aren't well known for their moral leadership.

We also wait. We wait for the coming of God's chosen King and the things that he will bring: judgement, righteousness, and home.

Judgement

20 `Therefore thus says the Lord GOD to them: "Behold, I Myself will judge between the fat and the lean sheep. 21 "Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad, 22 "therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

The true king will bring judgement. But upon whom does the judgement come? Our text speaks of those shepherds who do not care about the people. It also talks about those who are fat because they take for themselves and push and trample others. In our gospel reading we hear about those who do not care about others. They don't give food to the hungry or drink to the thirsty. They do not visit those who are sick or in prison. In other words, it is those who do not love, who do not have compassion, who do not have mercy, who do not forgive.

Jesus specifically mentions helping those in prison. Those in prison are supposedly there because they did something wrong. It is easy to say of such people they deserve what they got. To help them instead is a mark of a humble and repentant heart.

Jesus reminds us that "by this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

These are the marks of a disciple. These are the outward marks of a penitent and humble heart. That which saves is faith alone, but faith is never alone. Where there is repentance in the heart there will be mercy and forgiveness towards others.

With Christmas coming a lot of people are thinking about Santa Claus. The real Saint Nicolaus lived around 300 ad. He was a man with a fervent and joyful faith. This faith revealed itself in his love of handing out gifts to the children and his staunch and fervent defense of the deity of Christ. Today we recited the Nicene Creed. Saint Nicolaus was there. He helped write that. His humble and repentant faith was easily seen in his love and kindness for others and his defense of the truth of the gospel.

Jesus points to these outwards signs as proof of what he knows to be in the heart. Faith saves, but faith reveals itself in such actions and caring about others.

These outward works don't save, but they are the things Jesus points to on the last day as proof of faith in the heart.

Jesus brings judgement on those who don't not believe. But to those who trust in His promise he brings salvation.

Righteousness

11 `For thus says the Lord GOD: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. 12 "As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.

The king brings righteousness.

There are those who wait for the coming of Jesus because they believe he will set them on high above all the nations of the earth. They believe he will come and establish a throne in Jerusalem and that he will reign over the unbelievers. They believe that they will also reign. They wait for this worldly declaration that they were right. They believe this is the righteousness the King will bring.

This is not what Jesus promised. This is not what we are waiting for.

We wait for the righteousness of God and the reign of Christ in our hearts. We know that Jesus does reign in our hearts now. We also know His reign in our hearts is imperfect. His reign in our hearts is opposed by our sinful flesh and the temptations of the world.

We are righteous through faith and through Jesus' forgiveness. We also know that we are still full of sin. We hear Jesus' proclamation about those who helped the poor and the sick and the imprisoned and we wish that we were that good at showing love. We know we have fallen fall short of what we ought to be. We wish we could live up to Jesus' example.

Saint Nicolaus has become such a great legend specifically because his kindness is so rare even among Christians. If all Christians loved the way Jesus talks about in our gospel, Saint Nicolaus would have been forgotten long ago as just one more kind and generous man among many.

We know this and we wait for the day when we will stop disappointing one another and Jesus.

We wait for the day when we will dwell in righteousness with one another. When Jesus will reign in our hearts unopposed by our sinful flesh.

We don't need Jesus to reign in Jerusalem. We don't need to reign with Him in earthly glory. Jesus has never promised such a thing. We only desire the day when He will reign fully in our hearts. Jesus brings righteousness to our hearts.

Home

13 "And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 "I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

Jesus brings us a home.

"Home," Kaylee says, "I want go home."

The older my daughter gets the more she wants to go home, or stay at home. This is normal for special needs kids. She wants to stay in a familiar environment. She wants to stick to her routine. That which is different, unfamiliar, noisy, or lots of people confuse her. She just wants to go home.

Its not just Kaylee who likes to go home. Even those of us who love travel still like to get back home. Its nice to sleep in your own bed, to eat your own food.

Like my daughter we wait to go home.

Jesus promises that He will be our shepherd and lead us home.

The Lord says, "I will find them and gather them."
"My servant David shall feed them and watch over them."

When Jesus comes again, He will take us home. It will not be anything we have experienced before but it will be everything that we ever hoped for.

Holiday's are often disappointing. Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter these festivals have so much potential to be a time of joy, but somehow, they never live up to that potential.

We wait for home. There our family will be everything we wish our family would be. There our feast will be everything we wish our feasts here would be. There our father will be everything we wish a father could be. Our king will be everything we wish a king could be.

We will get there, and it will be unlike anything we have ever experienced, and yet we will immediately say, "Now I am home."

We wait for our king. He will take all those who have received his forgiveness home. Even so quickly come Lord Jesus. Amen