

**Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe  
(Year A)**

**Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17—The Divine Shepherd Who Seeks the Lost**

1. God seeks us first: “I myself will search for my sheep...” (34:11)
2. Salvation: I will “rescue them” on “a day of clouds and thick darkness” (34:12)
3. Divine Shepherd: “I will seek the lost...” (34:16)

**Psalms 23—The LORD is My Shepherd**

1. *Spiritual* Shepherd: restores “my soul” and leads me “in paths of righteousness” (23:3)

**1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28—The Final Judgment and the Kingdom of God**

1. What does “The End” look like? (15:24): Defeat of “Death” itself

**Matthew 25:31-46—Parable of the Sheep and the Goats**

1. The Context:
  - a. *Parousia*: “when the Son of man comes *in his glory*”
  - b. Final Judgment: “nations” are “gathered before him”
2. Analogy: “Shepherd” separating “sheep” (right hand) from “goats” (left hand)
3. The Sheep (the Right):
  - a. Blessing: “Come, o blessed of my Father...”
  - b. Salvation: “Inherit the kingdom...”
  - c. Providence: “prepared for you *from the foundation of the world*”
  - d. Works of Mercy: to the hungry, thirsty, naked, stranger, sick, imprisoned
  - e. Mystical Body of Christ: “you did it *to me*”
  - f. Resurrection: “eternal life” (Greek *zōēn aiōnion*)
4. The Goats (the Left):
  - a. Curse: “Depart from me, you cursed...”
  - b. Damnation: “into the eternal fire (Greek *to pyr to aiōnion*)”
  - c. Providence: “prepared for the devil and his angels...”
  - d. Sins of Omission: neglected the hungry, thirsty, naked, stranger, imprisoned
  - e. Mystical Body of Christ: “you did it *not to me*...”
  - f. Hell: “eternal punishment” (Greek *kolasin aiōnion*)

**The Catechism on Jesus’ Teaching about Hell**

*We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves... Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren. [Matt 25:31-46] To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God’s merciful love means remaining separated from him for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called “hell.” (CCC 1033)*

## The *Catechism* on Jesus’ Identification with the Poor

Jesus identifies himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love toward them the condition for entering his kingdom. (CCC 544)

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection (Solemnity of Christ the King, Year A)

1. The image of God as a “shepherd” reveals that “it is God who first seeks us” (CCC 2560). What does this image of God reveal to you about who he is? Is this how you think of him?

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2. What do you think of Jesus’ “conditions” for entering into the kingdom? Are the corporal works of mercy—feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned—really necessary for salvation? (See CCC 2447 on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy)

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3. Nowadays, many people do not believe in a final judgment or the reality of heaven and hell. Many people say: ‘How could a good God ever send someone to hell? What is Jesus’ teaching about heaven and hell? What does Jesus’ parable of the sheep and goats reveal about the final judgment? What does the *Catechism* teach about this controversial doctrine (see CCC 1033-37)?

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### For Further Study

1. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* nos. 1020-1041: important summary of the Church’s official teaching on Heaven, Hell, and the Final Judgment.
2. Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), pp. 325ff..
2. Manlio Simonetti, ed., *Matthew 14-28* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2002), 229-235. An excellent compilation of patristic interpretations of the parable of the final judgment.