

Sermon, November 26, 2017 - Last Sunday of the Church Year

Good Shepherding to the End

Ezekiel 34:11–16, 20–24



Introduction:

Dear Friends in Christ,

Today we observe the last day of the Church Year Calendar.

This Sunday is also known as the Sunday of the Fulfilment or Christ the King Sunday.

On a Christ the King Sunday, we would remember our King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and Shepherd of Shepherds.

Now-a-days, the titles of king, lord and shepherd, don't make much sense because these are titles we don't use anymore, at least in our midst. Yes, we know the meaning to those words but don't actually follow through with their incumbency. And maybe we do use the titles too

just that... well, just a title.

We don't use the title of Lord, do we? Not much, maybe with the exception of the tile of landlord, but that's about it. Now if you were in England, then maybe, you have the Lord so and so...right? Then in other areas we have designations like warlords, or drug lords, but that's all.

How about the title of King? Well not much here, is there? We do have Burger King, right, but well that's all.

There was a time though where somebody through the late 1950, 1960 and early 70 that was appreciated as the king. Do you know who that was?

That's right, Elvis Presley, the "king of rock and roll." Any Presley's fans here today? I was hoping there were some because I want to play little game, a guessing game, with you today. Let's see if you can identify the real Presley by his singing. As you know there has been many impersonators and a good ones for that matter that make it difficult to identify the real one. So here is the game, let's see if you can identify the real Elvis by these songs. So let's start..

- 1) The first one, let's hear it (Audio) Now, what do you think, is he the real Elvis or an impersonator? Now let's see if he is the real one... (video)
- 2) Next, let's hear the audio (Audio) Now, what do you think, is he the real Elvis or an impersonator? Now let's see if he is the real one (video)
- 3) One more audio clip...(Audio) Now, what do you think, is he the real Elvis or an impersonator? Now let's see if he is the real one (video)

Deceiving isn't it, impersonators do a good job to be as close to the real Elvis. Here the saying that goes something like, if it quacks like a duck, and walks like a duck, it must be a... duck, doesn't really apply, does it. Nope, because it is only when you see the source up close, only when you search, you then see who the real one is, and well is not a duck!

Now, what's purpose of this exercise? It is to help us identify the real King. As you see at Jesus second coming, he would have us welcome him as the King. And not

only welcome him as the King at that time, but even today, and more that we would appreciate that we have a King, that Jesus is our King, the only King, and that we be able to identify him as real King.

Now, what is that mean? Because, as far as we know, Jesus is King, right? I sure hope so. The fact is that there are impostors who under the disguise of presenting us the real King, actually give us a different one. By what they teach, believe and confess really they are referring completely to a different king. Yes they would talk about God, even Jesus but just because they speak the language of the Scriptures, doesn't mean they are pointing us to the right King, but an impostor one, an impersonator, not the real Jesus.

I can show you a long list of what is not from the real King, and go on, and on, talking about what the impostors teach, believe and confess. But I think that it is important to prepare you instead to watch and be careful about you hear, believe and even teach that what you do comes from the King, from the Good Shepherd, from God. Not all you hear is true, even what you hear sounds great, uplifting, and beneficial. And as we wait for the second coming of Jesus, we need to watch that our doctrine points really to the King who is to come again. We need to watch what we believe, teach and confess, because our salvation, hope and faith might be threatened, if not destroyed.

That's why the Scripture teaches us these words: "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Timothy 4:16 ESVUK) or as the NIV puts it: "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."

Now of course, this petition is expected of leaders, pastors, teachers, but by extension of all of us. That we watch what we teach, confess and believe in the midst of a myriad of teachings, ideas and philosophies that have the look and sound of point us to the King, or coming from the King, disguised as the Christian Faith. Therefore sticking to our doctrine is important so we are not deceived. After all we humans are easily deceived aren't we?

Now when we hear the word doctrine, we kind of dismiss the word or we associate it organized religion, or think of rules made by men, or whatever other ideas we have about the word, but really the word doctrine simple means teaching, what we have been taught from God's word, the truth of the Gospel, what it means and what it points us to.

So how are we to identify the King then? How are we to differentiate from that which is the real one and the impostor? Simply by the truth of the Gospel, of course by hearing his word, but studying his word which will ultimately point us to the nature of our King. And the nature of the King is not like the earthly definition we have of a king. No, the true King is the one who has the ultimate power, everything exists because of him; everything is governed by him and sustained by him.

The nature of our King is best seen as that of a Shepherd. His promise was from even old. As He said he will do in the Old Testament reading for today: "I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁶ I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice."

Can you hear his words, can you see his promise? Can you identify the Shepherd?" His promise is that he will search for you. Through his word, the means of grace, and the constant nagging of his word in the means of Law and Gospel he is searching for you today.

But can you hear him? Actually, do you want, do you desire to hear him?

Now, notice what he promises to do as a Shepherd. "Behold, I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out" (v 11).

He promises to search for his sheep. It is a wonderful promise that it is the Shepherd, not the sheep that will do the searching and finding. It is in the Shepherd that God fulfills his promise. And that Shepherd we know, Jesus Christ, our true King. But notice, it is him who does the searching, not the sheep. It is not what we think about God as the philosophies and teachings of this world like to point us to. But it is him who has come to search for us.

As it was in the Old Testament, so even today, there are many who have aspired to preach and teach God's people but have failed in their aspirations, because they did not stay grounded in the sound doctrine of the Scriptures and so have walked away from their faith drugging many with them.

Some of you know might know or have heard about this man before. Bart Campolo, he is the son of a preacher that I like to hear from, Tony Campolo. Tony has been a speaker at the Break Forth conferences, hasn't he? Now, Bart, was following his father's steps until he let go of the right doctrine from scriptures and became what we would call a progressive theologian. But that took him away from the real King and now, he follows an impostor, now, he is strong preacher and a pastor of humanism, as he calls himself a chaplain, and yes, he no longer believes in God.

He explains that his heresy, and disbelief began was exposed to urban poverty. "It messed with my theology," he explains. "I had a theology that said God could intervene and do stuff." But after a period of unanswered prayer, Bart admits: "I had to change my understanding of God. Sovereignty had to get dialed down a bit."

Campolo admitted that changing his view of God's sovereignty was "the beginning of the end" of his faith. Why? "Because once you start adjusting your theology to match up to the reality you see in front of you, it's an infinite progression. So over the course of the next 30 years...my ability to believe in a supernatural narrative or a God who intervenes and does anything died a death of a thousand unanswered prayers". Campolo continued: "I passed through every stage of heresy. It starts out with sovereignty goes, then biblical authority goes, then I'm a universalist, now I'm marrying gay people. Pretty soon I don't actually believe Jesus actually rose from the dead in a bodily way."

Then he adds, "Out there in the world is a growing and increasing number of young people who don't believe in God...They have no communities or groups. They need chaplains, community builders, songwriters. They need someone to help them define this way of life that makes it possible for them to share with other people." Can you see his desire to impose his view and atheist idea in our young generations?

Wow, now that is serious matter, dear friends.

But impostors continue, many wanted to serve God, only caving into the pleasures of this world, so they follow their own advantage, resulting in God's people being led into captivity.

The danger of walking away from sound and solid doctrine dear friends, is that we are led back into slavery of the evil one, into the darkness of our sin, and the slavery of dead works, at best, but the real danger is spiritual death, therefore eternal condemnation.

But thanks be to God that he enters history, our time and space through His Son Jesus, through His word and the means of grace to leads us into eternity. Although God's people are constantly being led into captivity, from both within and without the church. From Israel's history, we see that God comes to deliver us.

Christ, Our Shepherd, has come to rescues His People through his death, his burial and his resurrection. He leads us through His word and the sacraments.

The question is, are we willing to follow the Good Shepherd, are we willing to live under the domain of the true King?

Are we willing to search and hear the true King, or still want to be led by impostors or impersonators? I hope, I pray, and I ask you, in fact beg you to continue studying our doctrine. Read the Catechism, read our confessions, and most importantly read the Scripture and study it, as the writer to the Hebrews tells us: "Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith towards God..." (Hebrews 6:1-2)

As you see the author desires that we would grow beyond the elemental aspects of our faith. What we keep on maturing, and that we would keep on setting the foundation for what is to come in history. After all, not only we want to be with Jesus forever, but thing about the generations that come after us. So, to them you, parents, you grandparents, you ought to teach them the sound doctrine of God's word. But first you learn and deepen your knowledge first and as you go on teaching.

Conclusion:

As the psalmist sings: "For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand" (Ps 95:7a). Indeed! Jesus is our God, who continues to shepherd his people, the flock he has freed with his own blood. The true King that poured out his blood, to overflowing in his sacred chalice, from which all the sheep drink of life abundant. He feeds us with his own body, preparing a table for us in the presence of our enemies, which ends our captivity and nourishes us in faith and love. We hear Jesus' voice. We are held in his right hand. The True King holds us secure until the Last Day, when he shall enter history yet again—this time to judge ultimately all things truly and rightly. He is our great God and we are his freed people.

Amen.