* Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24
* Psalm 95:1-7a
* Ephesians 1:15-23
* Matthew 25:31-46
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Good Morning. May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus who is with us, always.

I remember in first grade there was the 1996 Presidential Election between Bill Clinton and Bob Dole. It was a big deal in our class that year as we were going to hold a mock election and then have a big party afterwards.

My teacher Mrs. Danz was amazing, she put up polling booths and got “I Voted” stickers for everyone, and then she talked to us about the importance of privacy while we were voting and when we were deciding to vote. It was an important lesson for us kids in how to exercise our right to vote when we came of age.

Mrs. Danz taught us about the office of the President and how important it was in the United States. It was the first time I learned that anyone could become the President of the United States. Of course, as a first grader I wasn’t aware that there are some details in there, like you can’t be a felon and you have to be born on U.S. soil.

But this idea that anyone could become the President of the United States, was so fascinating to all of us first graders. We began to look at one another differently, imagining one another as a possible future Mr. or Mrs. President of the United States.

I remember that was the big question in the lunchroom cafeteria. If you were to become the President of the United States, what would you do?!

Boy if those walls could talk, the imagination of first graders is wild. I remember one kid yelling out that if he became President of the United States he would make sure everyday was a birthday party, he went on to become a wedding D.J. yes ha ha. Another kid yelled out that she would make it to where everybody had a house, a car and food, she went on to become a social worker. I myself stepped up at one point during our lunchroom hour and said that if I became President of the United States I would make sure that everyone had a best friend. This was during the days of friendship bracelets and necklaces, if you can imagine.

Pretty much every child’s answer was that if they were in charge of the WHOLE country they wanted to make sure EVERYONE had something. That EVERYONE in the United States was provided for in some form or fashion, whether it was having a best friend, or birthday cake everyday. My first grade class felt that it was important when you are in a position of power to provide for the needs of others, needs being companionship, food, and a roof over your head, and of course fun.

Which brings us to today’s Gospel and Christ the King Sunday. Today is the Sunday where we remember Christ is King, Christ is the King of the world, and our own little worlds that we create. And in our reading from Matthew chapter 25 we hear this really “fun” parable of Jesus’ where he describes to his disciples what God imagines for those in power. For those who call themselves King, or in charge, or call themselves President, what is their responsibility according to God?

The parable, of course, gets a little confusing with the separating of sheep and goat, but instead of going too far deep into the theological splitting of hairs of what it means to be a goat versus a sheep. I would like us to focus on the role of King.

What is the role of a King? What is the role of the President of the United States? What is the role of someone who is in charge of other people's wellbeing?

Too often, as humans we confuse the idea of power as an excuse to do whatever WE want. Or as Martin Luther defines as original sin, *incurvatus se*, we turn to ourselves, only thinking of how to use our power to meet our own selfish needs and wants.

Today on Christ the King Sunday we are being challenged to ask ourselves – **when given power in this life, what will we do?**

As followers of Christ will we lead by separating people into good or bad? When thrust into a position of power, or elected for a position of power will we lead by fear, or will we lead by trying to help meet the needs of EVERYONE with the possibility that we may even be entertaining God himself in our charity?

In the parable today, we see two ways of leading one is the sheep where a person with resources and power goes about trying to meet the needs of others, going beyond the self the Gospel is clear those needs are: food, water, clothing hospitality, shelter, nursing the sick and visiting the imprisoned.

The other way of leadership is through the path of the goat, where one pretty much ignores the basic needs of others: such as food, water, clothing, hospitality, shelter, nursing the sick and visiting the imprisoned.

You see as Lutherans, [and or Mainline Protestants if a yoked congregation using this sermon] we believe, as a community grounded in Christ, that **we are all leaders**. We believe that we are all called to assume a role of power in one another's spiritual lives depending on the circumstances.

This is what the *priesthood of all believers* is all about, and why Martin Luther’s work during the protestant reformation was so exciting. Luther believed all are called to baptize, commune and nurture one another in our collective spiritual life, not just rostered clergy, not just monks or nuns living in convents, not just Princes, Emperor’s or Popes, but that we all are given the power to either lead beyond our own wants, needs and desires, or to turn to ourselves and worship our own earthly understanding of how others should live.

So for Christ the King Sunday my question to you again is this – How do you want to lead? If you were King, what would you do? Because all of you are leaders, all of you have been called by God to love on others, to advocate and to foster community. No pressure right!?

Being a Christian doesn’t mean we get off easy, it doesn’t mean we get to just come to church and then leave and go back to our secular lives hoping to make a quick buck. When we acknowledge our baptism for what it is, we are accepting that our lives as leaders in Christ will mean we live outside what is normally expected of a leader in the secular world. **We function outside of what it means to be successful in the world of today.**

How many of you would vote for a president that ran on the slogan that he or she would provide a birthday party with birthday cake everyday of the year?!

Not many of us, because sadly we have all been conditioned by a world that is focused on earthly things, “goat” priorities, rather than “sheep” priorities when it comes to leadership and love.

How can we today with this strange, but important Gospel in mind – look to the King above all Kings, Jesus for inspiration on the role of a King, the role of a leader? We look to God knowing that God shows up in those who are vulnerable as well as those who are in power, like our Gospel shares today in verse 37, *“‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.’”*

Who we take care of, and how we do it, in this life matters. How we lead matters, and as we look to Christ as the King of the World, we look to a partially human, partially Divine entity that came into a world, a community where much of his power was used to help those in need, spiritually or physically. Jesus ministered to the lepers, sex workers, widows and orphans. He also ministered to the tax collectors, politicians and religious authorities as we see with the stories of Zaccheus, the healing of the Roman Centurion’s servant and his connection with the Pharisee Nicodemus.

Jesus led with dignity and consideration of basic needs both physically and spiritually and he didn’t worry about a person’s status on this earth. He didn’t engage with a person with the hopes that they would hand out favors to him, if he had been a leader in this way, he would’ve never been crucified and died for our sins.

So again, as we look to our God, a humble God, a God who leads unexpectedly, who invites us to lead not knowing who is least and who is more. What type of King would you be?

Or if you really want to get into the 1990 First grader mindset, what would you do if you were President of the United States?!

As you reflect on this question this week, use your imagination, think beyond the world of budgets and numbers, and taxes, **think like a sheep** where all are fed, all are visited, all are clothed, and all know that God loves them, no matter what. **Amen.**