Gospel and Sermon Transcript - 26th Sunday After Pentecost - November 22 , 2026

00:18
Good morning. Welcome to services as you've probably figured out by now. Pastor

00:24
is not here. He's actually taking a vacation a week this week but we'll be

00:30
back next Sunday.

00:33
[music]

01:05
The Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of our Lord according to Matthew. Jesus said to

01:14
the disciples, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory and all the angels with Him,

01:21
then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the angels will be gathered

01:26
before Him and He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates

01:32
the sheep from the goats. And he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats

01:38
at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you who are

01:45
blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of

01:51

the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me

01:58
something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave

02:05
me clothing. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.

02:13
Then the righteous will answer him, Lord when was it that we saw you hungry and

02:20
gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that

02:26
we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing and when

02:33
was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer

02:39
them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers

02:46
and sisters of mine, you did it to me." Then he will say to those at his left hand,

02:53
You who are accursed depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

03:02
For I was hungry and you gave me no food. I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink.

03:10
I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and imprisoned and you did not visit me.

03:21
Then they will also answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry, or thirsty, or

03:28
a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of you?"

03:35
Then he will answer them, "Truly, I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least

03:42
of these, you did not do it to me."

03:46
And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

03:52
The Gospel of our Lord.

03:55
Please be seated.

The Sermon

04:07
The sermon I'm going to read today was written by the Reverend Victoria Scott, who is

04:16
an honorary assistant at the Anglican Christ Church Cathedral in Ottawa.

04:28
If you're unfamiliar with the parable of the sheep and the goats and you get to the pearly

04:32
gates, get in the line marked sheep.

04:37
Author Jill Levine offers this tongue-in-cheek advice in her book about the parables.

04:45
If only it were that easy.

04:48
If only there was a checklist, find one hungry person, one thirsty person, one sick person,

04:56
and one person in prison, and done.

04:59
Through the pearly gates we go.

05:02
I think we all know that this either/or in/out checklist approach isn't what Jesus was all

05:11
about.

05:13
Today is the last Sunday of the Church year, the last Sunday after Pentecost, when we celebrate

05:20
the reign of Christ.

05:23
This was originally a Roman Catholic feast day known as the Solemnity of our Lord Jesus

05:28
Christ, King of the Universe.

05:31
Can be traced back to 1925 and its purpose was to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the King

05:39
of all kings and as a way to bring God back into a secular world.

05:47
For many of us, this King of all kings imagery is challenging.

05:54
I find it challenging in the same way I am challenged by the sheep and the goats.

06:00
The right side or the left and clearly wrong side, judgment and eternal punishment or salvation.

06:11
You're with the King of Kings or you're not. For many of us, this judgment and

06:18
eternal punishment just doesn't fit with our theology. It doesn't fit with

06:25
believing in the God of love and compassion. Last week I talked about

06:32
parables being living things and I quoted Lutheran pastor and author

06:38
Nadia Bolz-Weber, who says that dissecting parables, looking for hidden meaning that is

06:47
static and unchanging, is like performing an autopsy on someone. We might see some sort

06:54
of mechanical meaning, but in doing so, we prevent that living thing from ever changing

07:02
us again.

07:06
Barbara Brown Taylor reminds us that the Bible isn't a book with answers at the back.

07:14
So what are we to do with these stories?

07:17
What are we to do with the imagery of kings and the reign of Christ?

07:23
Parker Palmer writes and speaks about the tragic gap.

07:29
He says that Christianity requires us to stand in the tragic gap.

07:36
On one side of the gap, we look at the hard realities around us.

07:42
Poverty, anger, hatred, greed, despair, we see all of that everywhere.

07:50
We see hungry and thirsty people everywhere.

07:53
We watch it on TV, on social media.

07:58
On the other side of where we're standing are those things we know to be possible, not

08:05
because we wish they were true, but because we've seen them with our own eyes.

08:10
We've seen greed, but we've also seen generosity.

08:15
We've seen rampant and competitive individualism, but we've also seen collaboration and community.

08:25
What we need to do to stay in the action is to stand in the tragic gap without flipping

08:33
onto one side or the other.

08:36
Too much of the hard realities and we become cynical.

08:41
Too much of the other side and you're into irrelevant idealism.

08:48

These two sides sound very different, but they're actually the same.

08:53
They take us out of the action and leave us doing nothing.

08:59
Parker Palmer also talks about two kinds of tension.

09:03
There's destructive tension and creative tension.

09:07
Destructive tension shatters our heart into a million pieces.

09:14
We're out of the action because we're

09:15
too busy crawling around on the floor, picking up the pieces,

09:19
and trying to put our heart back together again.

09:23
Creative tension breaks open our hearts into greater capacity

09:29
to hold both the joy and the suffering that

09:33
come with being human.

09:36
A willingness to stand in the tragic gap

09:39
puts us in a place where our hearts can be broken open.

09:47
This week's parable and all the parables

09:49
have the potential to break open our hearts.

09:53
If part of acknowledging and celebrating the reign of Christ

09:57
is about relevance in the secular world,

10:00
hearts not shattered by the harsh reality of the world,

10:05
nor trapped in idealism, but rather broken open

10:10
is surely part of that relevance.

10:14
Today's parable, the reign of Christ and the tragic gap,

10:19
it's all about how we see the world

10:22
and about how we invite others to see it.

10:26
Notice that neither the sheep nor the goats

10:29
knew what they'd done.

10:31
The sheep hadn't noticed Jesus any more than the goats.

10:36
Noticing this moves us away from a checklist

10:40
into an opportunity to see things differently.

10:44
Jesus doesn't stop with either/or. Whenever we are faced with a dilemma, with

10:52

contradiction, with paradox, we as followers of Jesus have to hold the

10:58
moment. And if we do, we'll find a third way. You have to feel the tension in the

11:05
dilemma to move beyond that either/or into a third way. It's this tension and

11:13
the willingness to stand in it, to feel it, stretch us and challenge us,

11:21
challenge us that breaks open our hearts. In that same podcast episode I've

11:29
mentioned more than once now, The One You Feed, a conversation with host Eric

11:35
and Richard Rohr. Richard Rohr talks about the middle way, not as being about

11:43
balancing opposites, but about holding both. He sees this in the cross. Jesus was

11:51
willing to hold it all. He's holding all the opposites, not balancing them out. He

11:58
He doesn't balance it.

12:00
He suffers it.

12:02
It stretches him and he holds it all until it transforms him.

12:08
And we call this resurrection.

12:13
Barbara Brown Taylor says this, "Charity is no substitute for kinship.

12:19
We are not called to be philanthropists or social workers, but siblings.

12:27
We are called into relationship even when that relationship is unlikely, momentary,

12:33
or sad.

12:35
We are called to look at each other and see Christ, who promises to be there where our

12:42
eyes meet, and in that glance to teach us something we need to know.

12:51
We are called into relationship even when that relationship seems unlikely.

12:57
We are drawn into relationship and we are called to pause when those relationships create

13:03
dilemmas.

13:04
We're called to pause and to trust that God is with us, offering us a way between, a way

13:13
that may challenge us but that also has the potential to transform us, to break open our

13:21
hearts if we let it. Bring this third way into what this parable of sheep and

13:28
goats tells us and the call to feed the hungry, offer drink to the thirsty, to

13:34
clothe the naked and visit the prisoner is not about the dilemma between dropping

13:39
a coin in the panhandler's cup or not. It's about pausing in that moment of

13:47
of apparent dilemma.

13:49
It's about stopping and looking into the eyes

13:53
of that panhandler and greeting them with an open mind

13:58
and an open heart.

14:01
If we do that, it's not going to end up

14:04
being about the coin in the cup.

14:06
It just might be about something much, much more.

14:11
It'll be about transformation on both sides.

14:17
If the reign of Christ is still about the relevance of God or the church in a secular world,

14:24
we have to move away from messages about sheep and goats as a way of convincing ourselves and

14:30
others of who's in and who's out, who's with the King of Kings and who's not. We can be in the

14:38
action as Parker Palmer describes it if we make it not about which line we're in

14:45
at the pearly gates but about the tragic gap about the third way the middle way

14:52

Jesus way between apparent dilemmas in ourselves and in our world. Let us pray.

15:01
May we find that way together here in this church and in our own hearts. May

15:09
our hearts be broken open and may we break open hearts today and every day. In

15:16
Jesus name, Amen.