

Last Sunday of the Church Year

OLD TESTAMENT – Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

¹¹”“For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. ¹²As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. ¹³I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. ¹⁴I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. ¹⁶I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice. ²⁰”“Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says to them: See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, ²²I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. ²³I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. ²⁴I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken.

34:11-12 Again, the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ is replete with imagery drawn from these verses (especially Mt 25:32–46; Lk 15:3–7; Jn 10:7–18). Jesus himself is the Shepherd (Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25) who has come for “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt 15:24). Moreover, he sends his apostles (and now pastors) as his undershepherds to gather “the lost sheep” (Mt 10:6). That they are both to “tend” (ποιμαίνω) and “feed” (βόσκω) his “lambs” (Jn 21:15–17) has Eucharistic overtones. (CC)

The scattering of the sheep “on a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Ezek 34:12) would apply to the fall of Jerusalem in Ezekiel’s day (Ezek 33:21–22) and to its destruction in A.D. 70, as well as to all the persecutions inflicted on the church (cf. the scattering resulting from the persecution in Acts 8:1; 11:19), but the apocalyptic language especially points to the return of Christ, when his elect shall be gathered from all the earth (Mt 24:29–31). (CC)

34:11 SOVEREIGN LORD – The double name for God here is literally, “Adonai Yahweh” or “my Lord Yahweh, and occurs some 293 times in the OT, mostly in the prophets, and in fact 217 are in Ezekiel. Adonai is always in the plural when used of God (just like the general title Elohim, “God”) and thus witnesses to the triune nature of the Deity. There is sense of “having supreme rank, power, authority; being above all others in character, importance, excellence.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

I myself will search for my sheep. Having dealt with the faithless shepherds (vv. 1–10), the Lord committed himself to shepherd his flock (see Jer 23:3–4). (CSB)

In these verses, the tender, loving care for His miserable fallen creatures demonstrates that the God of the OT is not a wrathful ogre delighting in crushing helpless victims. He is the Father who sent His Son to seek and to save the lost. (TLSB)

In a world where it is increasingly difficult to find Christian leaders in any area of life, it is comforting to know the Lord has promised to get personally involved in caring for the needs of His people when those who should be providing leadership aren't doing their jobs. (PBC) – LUKE 15

Human faithfulness has frustrated His intentions; if it is going to get done. (Concordia Journal – March, 1984)

Through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are sheep of the Good Shepherd (Ps. 23:1). “For He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care” (Ps. 95:7). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

34:12 AS A SHEPHERD – This refers again to this careful seeking (baqarah, verbal noun) of a shepherd who finds himself “in the midst of” a “scattered flock.” Yahweh has a people. When He comes to be with them, He discovers they are scattered. (Concordia Journal – March, 1984)

I WILL RESCUE THEM – *wehitstalti* implies that they have fallen into danger or under oppression. (Concordia Journal – March, 1984)

from all the places. Babylon was not the only place where the Israelites had gone (see Jer 43:1–7). (CSB)

day of clouds and darkness. The day of the Lord that had come upon Israel when Jerusalem fell in August of 586 B.C. (see 7:7 and note). (CSB)

Times of general distress and persecution; in such times the shepherd should be especially watchful. (ACC)

34:13 *I will bring them out.* The promises of restoration—begun in 11:17 and repeated in 20:34, 41–42; 28:25—find special emphasis in this part (chs. 33–39) of Ezekiel (see 36:24; 37:21; 38:8; 39:27). (CSB)

God promises that He will “bring them out from the nations.” The people of God had been deported to Babylon, where they would live in captivity for 70 years. God’s promise to restore them gives hope. ((Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

The three expressions at the beginning of the verse represent standard prophetic typology, referring to a preliminary “fulfillment” in Israel’s return from the exile, but in total biblical perspective prophesying the ingathering of believers into the “promised land” of the *una sancta* (“one holy catholic and apostolic church” [Nicene Creed]), and even encompassing the final “communion of saints” of all times and places (cf. Ezek 20:34–35, 41–42; 36:24; 37:12, 21). “The mountains of Israel” (which will be featured twice again in the next verse) as the site of the ingathering of Israel represent again one of Ezekiel’s favorite characterizations of the promised land. Here the phrase contrasts with its use in 34:6, where “the mountains” were the site of the people’s previous leaderless dispersal. (CC)

It is interesting to note that although Ezekiel frequently speaks of “the land [אֶרֶץ] of Israel,” he uses suffixed forms, “your/their land/ground,” only in restoration oracles. (CC)

Although generally Ezekiel maintains the ovine and geographical metaphors, with mention of “settlements,” the real referent intrudes briefly: the *people* of the true Israel, the church of both Testaments (Gal 6:16; Ephesians 2). When the return took place, the people would naturally rebuild their cities and villages. Explicit accent on the people will not become dominant until Ezek 34:25–31. (CC)

mountains of Israel. † Compare the tone of 6:3–7 with judgment now past (see v. 12). (CSB)

When I bring back the people from their captivity, I will raise up to them a holy and diligent priesthood, who shall in all places give them sound instruction. But this, and some of the following promises, belong to the Christian Church, as we shall find below. (ACC) NEW ISRAEL – PSALM 23

THEIR OWN LAND – Israel, land flowing with milk and honey, was given to them solely by God’s grace and according to His promises. Our “own land” is heaven, which God will give to us by His grace. We too are foreigners and exiles on earth, for our citizenship is in heaven (Heb 11:14-16). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

PORTION – The tribes of Israel were each given a portion of the Promised Land, though the priestly clan of the Levites was given God Himself, not land, as their inheritance (Dt 10:9; see note, Ps 119:57). Inheritance is an important expression of God’s graciousness in the OT. He gives lovingly and freely to His people as a father lovingly provides for his children. God’s chosen people are His portion and treasured possession (Dt 32:9). (TLSB p. 7)

34:14 *I will tend them.* See Isa 40:11; Jn 10:11. (CSB)

Isaiah 40:11, “He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; [baby sleeps to beat of heart of dad or mom] he gently leads those that have young.”

GOOD PASTURE..MOUNTAIN HEIGHTS..GOOD GRAZING LAND..RICH PASTURE – God gives far more than the minimal essentials. The best is yet to come for us sojourners. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

34:15 I MYSELF WILL TEND MY SHEEP – Sheep are not “in good hands” with a hired shepherd (Jn 10:11-13). Our Sovereign King is also our Good Shepherd. He feeds us from His hand just as a shepherd feeds his sheep. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

HAVE THEM LIE DOWN – A shepherd leads the flock to the best areas for grazing and rest. (TLSB)

34:16 I WILL SEARCH – That no one was “searching for, seeking” (שׁוֹקֵד, 34:4, 6) the sheep is remedied by the promise that Yahweh himself will do so (שׁוֹקֵד, “seek,” in 34:16), as fulfilled in the NT, when “the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Lk 19:10, with ζητέω, which the LXX uses in Ezek 34:4, 16; ἐκζητέω in 34:6). Likewise, Christ himself is the man who “seeks” the one lost sheep in Mt 18:12. (CC)

the sleek and the strong. Those with power who had fattened themselves by oppressing the other “sheep” (see vv. 17–22). – I will destroy those cruel and imperious shepherds who abuse their authority, and tyrannize over the flock. (ACC) – JEWISH LEADERS AND WIDOW’S HOUSES

This verse is a good example of the biblical theme of the Great Reversal, like Lk 1:53: “He has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

34:20 I MYSELF WILL JUDGE – Cf Mt 25:31–46. (TLSB)

BETWEEN FAT SHEEP...THE LEAN – Between the rich and the poor; those who fare sumptuously every day and those who have not the necessities of life. (ACC)

34:21 SHOVE...BUTT – When leaders abuse their high calling, the people begin to abuse one another. Then the weak are taken advantage of. (PBC)

History judges churches, nations and societies on how they treat the weakest among them.

HORNS – An image of power. Animals with horns are bold; in Israelite thought, a horned animal with its head held high symbolized strength and triumph. (TLSB p. 842)

24:23-24 So much is packed in these two verses that one could almost construct an OT Christology from them. (CC)

The opening verb, “I will raise up” (‘תִּמְנֶנֶהוּ, Hiphil of מָנָה), is a standing expression for the establishment of some person in a position through God’s interposition. Moses uses it in Deut 18:15, 18 for God’s promise to establish the Prophet like Moses, that is, Christ (Acts 3:22; 7:37). Elsewhere in the OT it is employed to describe Yahweh’s appointment of all sorts of figures: prophets (Amos 2:11), priests (1 Sam 2:35), and kings (1 Ki 14:14; Jer 30:9). Often it is used for God establishing his gracious covenant. The point here is that this “Shepherd” will not be self-appointed nor selected by popular referendum; his sole source and authority is God. (CC)

Some debate turns about the import of the use of **רֹעֶה**, “one Shepherd” (which in other contexts can merely be the sign of an indefinite noun). The antithesis is probably twofold: both the many evil shepherds of the past and especially the two competing kings of the divided empire after the death of Solomon. Only a single ruler under Yahweh could provide the unity and consistency necessary for a united and faithful people. We probably have here an initial statement of the refrain heard in all the prophets who address the topic: the eschatological restoration of the united monarchy. As he often does in Ezekiel, Yahweh here merely suggests or adumbrates a topic he will later expand much more fully. In this case, the full treatment comes in 37:16–24, where the word **רֹעֶה**, “one,” will occur no less than eleven times. (CC)

Of course, Jesus draws on 34:23 when, in Jn 10:16, he refers to other sheep (Gentiles) that he must gather into “one flock” under himself as the “one Shepherd.” The one church spanning both Testaments consists of all believers in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles (e.g., Gal 3:26–29; 6:16; Ephesians 2). All who are under the “one Shepherd” are part of God’s one flock; conversely, all who refuse to submit to this one Shepherd are not. (CC)

“My Servant David” or similar phrases are standing titles of King David. The noun **עֶבֶד**, “servant,” is so structured in biblical theology that its use can hardly even be surveyed here. It is typically used of those who stood in some official position and especially of those chosen for a special task. In addition to David, phrases indicating that the person was a “servant” of Yahweh are used of Abraham (Gen 26:24; Ps 105:6, 42), Isaac (Gen 24:14), Jacob/Israel (Ezek 28:25; 37:25; 1 Chr 16:13), Moses (often, e.g., Ex 14:31; Josh 18:7), and others, particularly the Suffering Servant in Isaiah. Such phrases are used of David thirty-one times in the OT. They accent not only David’s obedience in contrast to the insubordination of the “shepherds” of Ezek 34:1–10, but also his election (1 Ki 11:34; cf. Is 42:1). (CC)

Our concern here is with the servant David, whose forty-year reign (ca. 1000–960 B.C.) preceded Ezekiel by some four centuries. The basic source of expectations about the “house” of David is Nathan’s oracle to David (2 Samuel 7 || 1 Chronicles 17; cf. Is 9:6–7; Psalm 89). There the promise is made of the perpetuity of David’s dynasty through his Son; it will last “forever” (**לְעוֹלָם** is used repeatedly). Jeremiah summarizes it classically in 33:17, 20–21, 25–26. In the earlier pastoral context of Ezekiel 34, it is perhaps not coincidental that David had been called from the **בֵּית דָּוִד** (“pastoral encampment,” the same

term in Ezek 34:14) to be a מֶלֶךְ (“ruler”) over Israel (2 Sam 7:8). Samuel avoids the label מֶלֶךְ, “king,” as assiduously as Ezekiel does, and for comparable reasons. (CC)

The election and survival of the people of Israel was inextricably bound up with Yahweh’s covenant with David. Inevitably, the fall of Jerusalem and the carrying of the Davidic descendant King Jehoiachin into captivity with Ezekiel had called all this into question. But Yahweh’s promises could not fail, and so one should not be surprised that faithful Israel’s hopes in and after the exile should be formulated in terms of the kingship of David. How significant this hope was after the return is obvious, where צֶמַח, “Branch” (earlier used by Is 4:2; Jer 23:5; 33:15) has all but become a proper noun for the Messiah (Zech 3:8; 6:12). Even though among first-century Jews this hope became contaminated with dreams of political liberation, its centrality in the NT faith needs no demonstration here. (CC)

If God is to break the power and reign of sin, He must send into this world His own vice-regent, His servant David. This future human-divine Shepherd and Prince will not destroy the sheep but feed them with bread from heaven (Jn 6:32–40). The brilliance of divine revelation shines into coming centuries. Ezekiel sees this transformation from doom to delight in the perspective of prophetic vision. Past, present, and future merge into a single dimension of timeless fact. The old covenant blends into the new covenant. (TLSB)

34:23 *my servant David.* † A ruler like David and from his line (see Ps 89:4, 20, 29; Jer 23:5–6). Under great David’s greater Son there would be one flock, one Shepherd who will feed them with the bread from heaven (Jn 6:32–40; 10:16). (CSB)

The 12 tribes of Jacob were divided into two kingdoms after Solomon’s death. Under great David’s greater Son, there will be one flock, one shepherd. (TLSB)

34:24 MY SERVANT – This is the same term used in Isaiah of the Suffering Servant (Is. 42:1; 53:1 etc.). He will bestow upon His blood-bought people all the promised covenant blessings in richest measure. These blessings – the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation – are already ours by faith. We will experience their fullness in heaven. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

WILL BE PRINCE – This literally means “one lifted up,” a leader or ruler. In the same eschatological vision of Ezekiel 40-48, this same Hebrew term will be used of the Prince over the people in the eternal kingdom (Ez 45:7, 17, 22; 46:2, 4, 8, 10, 12, 16-18; 48:21-22). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

No one will occupy the throne after Him, for He will be the Prince forever (37:25). Cf 2Sm 7:11–16; Is 9:5–6; 11:1–2; Jer 30:9. For Jesus’ human ancestry from David’s royal house. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the

dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ²⁴ Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. ²⁸ When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

15:20 Leaving behind the depressing hypotheses which filled the previous paragraph (1 Cor. 15:12–19: “if there were no resurrection of the dead ...”), Paul gives a ringing affirmation: “But as it is [ἡ ἀλήθεια], Christ has been raised from the dead” (15:20). The Corinthians should never doubt this basic tenet of their creed, nor should they doubt its implications for their own resurrection. For the risen Christ is not the only one who would rise; he is the “firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (15:20; cf. Rev 1:5). Just as the Israelites brought the sheaf of firstfruits to the Lord on the “Sunday” after Passover as a sign that the whole harvest belonged to him (Lev 23:9–15), so Christ’s resurrection was the pledge that all who had fallen asleep in him would be physically raised as he was. (CC p. 568)

BUT - nuni – But now, just now, but as it is, meaning that it is a fact and this is the end of all speculation. (TLSB)

But Christ has indeed been raised. Paul’s categorical conclusion based on his evidence set forth in vv. 3–8. (CSB)

“Christ has indeed been raised.” The verb *hegēgertai* is the perfect passive of *hegeirō*, “to raise.” This verb form expresses the certainty of Christ’s bodily resurrection as an accomplished fact. This is the 7th occurrence of the verb in this chapter. “Make no mistake,” Paul is saying, “Christ has been raised!” It is done! We know it and believe it! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

But He came forth alive from the grave in which He lay and destroyed and consumed both devil and death, who had devoured Him. He tore the devil’s belly and hell’s jaws asunder and ascended into heaven, where He is now seated in eternal life and glory.” This is to be comfort and defiance. For on His name we are baptized, and we hear and profess His Word. After Him we are called Christians, and for His sake we suffer every misfortune and grief from the hand of the devil. For this is not aimed at us but at Him and His kingdom, whose enemy the devil is. He tries to destroy it, and he treats us so roughly and wearies us with pursuit, harassment, and death so that we might forsake Christ. (Luther)

The apostle comes now to the triumphant assertion of the fact, the proof of which he has already stated. (CB)

firstfruits. The first sheaf of the harvest given to the Lord (Lev 23:10–11, 17, 20) as a token that all the harvest belonged to the Lord and would be dedicated to him through dedicated lives. So Christ, who has been raised, is the guarantee of the resurrection of all of God’s redeemed people (cf. 1Th 4:13–18). (CSB)

The earliest portion of a harvest, which Israel sacrificed to God in thanks for the full harvest to come. (TLSB)

The first of any crop, herd or family was given to the Lord. This represented all the rest of the crop, herd or family. In this case it means that Christ’ resurrection includes the resurrection of everyone else.

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ἀπαρχή—This is one of the Greek words the LXX uses (e.g., Ex 23:19; Ezek 44:30) to translate בְּכֹרֵי, the “firstfruits” God commanded the Israelites to offer to him (e.g., Ex 23:19; 34:22, 26; Lev 23:17, 20). The “firstfruits” were the first produce from the harvest, with the full harvest yet to come. The LXX also uses the word to translate בְּכוֹר, the “firstborn” son and “firstborn” animals that were to be offered to God (e.g., Ex 22:28; Deut 12:6, 17). The NT regularly uses this term of a first installment which betokens a greater fullness to come (Rom 8:23; 11:16; 16:5; 1 Cor 15:20, 23; 16:15; 2 Thess 2:13; James 1:18; Rev 14:4). Cf. LXX Lev 23:10. (CC p. 566)

And what is more than that, by calling Christ “the Firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” Paul wishes to signify that the resurrection is to be viewed and understood as having already begun in Christ, indeed, as being more than half finished, and that this remnant of death is to be regarded as no more than a deep sleep, and that the future resurrection of our body will not differ from suddenly awaking from such a sleep. For the main and best part of this has already come to pass, namely, that Christ, our Head, has arisen. But now that the Head is seated on high and lives, there is no longer any reason for concern. (Luther)

15:21-22 Luther: “St. Paul is still speaking only about those who are Christians. These he wants to instruct and console with this article. For although also the non-Christians must all arise, this will not be to their comfort and joy, since they will arise for judgment and not for life... I will say nothing of that great vulgar throng which seeks its pleasure and consolation only here, which [despises] God’s Word and cares not a mite for God and His kingdom. It is not surprising that such people are annoyed to hear of the blessed resurrection; for us, however, it is pure joy, because we hear that our greatest Treasure, over which we rejoice, is already in heaven above, and that only the most insignificant part remains behind; and that He will awaken this, too, and draw it after Him as easily as a person awakens from sleep” (AE 28:114–15). (TLSB)

15:21 *death came through a man*. Through Adam (Ge 3:17–19). (CSB)

δι' ἀνθρώπου θάνατος ... δι' ἀνθρώπου ἀνάστασις—Literally, “through a man death ... through a man resurrection.” The Greek is succinct; there are no verbs and no definite articles. The translation of ἄνθρωπος as “man” (KJV, NIV, RSV) rather than “human being” (NRSV) is defensible not only for its succinctness but also because of the referents, Adam and Christ (15:22). (CC p. 566)

“In Adam all die.” All who are in Adam—his descendants, meaning all people—must suffer death because they have inherited his sin and its consequences. This is why Paul reminds us that the last enemy to be destroyed is death (v 26). Since all human beings are physical descendants of Adam, all are heirs of the physical result of his disobedience: death. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Through one man’s disobedience, the tragedy of human suffering and death had become the common lot of all (1 Cor 15:21–22) (See also, e.g., Gen 2:17; 4:8, 23; 5:5). It was fitting, then, that it would be through the obedience of another man, the second Adam, that resurrection and life would come to all men. Later Paul would spell this out more fully in his epistle to the Romans (5:12–21). Here he sketches the Adam-Christ typology in the briefest terms. Just as Adam’s sin and death affected not only himself but all humanity, so the Corinthians needed to appreciate that Christ’s resurrection was not only for his own benefit; through this Man the resurrection from the dead had become the destiny of all believers. For just as Adam was the head of the old humanity, so that his fall left a legacy of sin and death to all, so Christ stands as head of the new humanity to be made alive in him. And—to use Luther’s fine analogy from the birth of humans and animals—“after [the head] is born, the whole body follows easily.” (CC pp. 568-569)

Cf. LW 28:110:

For the main and best part of this has already come to pass, namely, that Christ, our Head, has arisen. But now that the Head is seated on high and lives, there is no longer any reason for concern. We who cling to Him must also follow after Him as His body and His members. For where the head goes and abides, there the body with all the members must necessarily follow and abide. As in the birth of man and of all animals, the head naturally appears first, and after this is born, the whole body follows easily. (CC p. 569)

the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. Through Christ, the second Adam, “the last Adam” (v. 45; cf. Ro 5:12–21). (CSB)

Here St. Paul places these two types over against each other. He wants to say: “Through one man, Adam, so much was effected that all men must now die, both he and all of us who, after all, did not commit or perpetrate the offense but came into sin and death solely because we are descended from him.” Although this happens after the Fall, yet it is no longer the sin of another, but it becomes our own when we are born. That is a miserable deal and an awful judgment of God; and it would be still more terrible if we were all to remain in death eternally. But now God placed a second Man, called Christ, over against the first one, so that, just as we die without any fault of our own by reason of the first man, we shall live again by reason of Christ and without our

merit. And as we in Adam have to pay solely for the fact that we are his members or his flesh and blood, so we enjoy our advantage here in Christ also solely by virtue of His being our Head. It is pure grace and gift, so that we have no works or merits to boast of here. (Luther)

“In Christ all will be made alive.” The verb *zōiopoieῩthēsontai* is first future passive indicative of *zōiopoieō*, “to make alive.” Paul contrasts the present reality of death with the future reality of resurrection. Though physical death is a certainty for everyone, it is equally certain that those in Christ will be made alive. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

15:22 *in Adam all die.* All who are “in Adam”—i.e., his descendants—suffer death. (CSB)

ἐν τῷ Ἀδὰμ ... ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ—The definite articles point to both Adam and Christ as specific historical persons. (CC p. 566)

in Christ all will be made alive.† All who are “in Christ”—i.e., who are related to him through faith—will be made alive at the resurrection (cf. Jn 5:25; 1Th 4:16–17; Rev 20:6). (CSB)

ζωοποιηθήσονται—See this verb also in 15:36, 45. In the LXX God “is almost always the subj[ect] of ζωοποιεῖν.” He kills and *makes alive* (2 Ki 5:7; cf. 1 Sam 2:6). In the NT the subject may be God the Father (Jn 5:21; Rom 4:17; 8:11) or God the Son (Jn 5:21; 1 Cor 15:45) or God the Spirit (Jn 6:63; 2 Cor 3:6). The verb is strongly soteriological and eschatological, pointing to the triune God’s unique power in making alive through the Gospel those who are spiritually dead, and raising those who are physically dead. In Jn 5:21 and Rom 8:11 it parallels ἐγείρω. Compare Rev 20:4–6, 12–15, which portrays “the first resurrection [ἀνάστασις]” (Rev 20:5) as the spiritual resurrection of Christians in this life, when they are made alive through the Gospel. The second resurrection is the bodily resurrection of all people on Judgment Day. (CC pp. 566–567)

This latter clause in 1 Cor 15:22 (“so also in Christ all will be made alive”) must not be understood in a universalistic sense. Only “those who belong to Christ” (οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, 15:23) through baptismal incorporation (“we all were baptized with one Spirit into one body,” 12:13) and by faith will receive the gift of resurrection to eternal life. Unbelievers too will be raised bodily but then will be cast into the lake of fire, which is “the second death” (Rev 20:14–15; cf. Dan 12:1–3). (CC p. 569)

The verb is first future passive indicative, “to make alive.” Paul contrasts the present reality of death with the future reality of resurrection.

Therefore the grace, the consolation, and the joy are as great here as the misery and sadness are there, indeed, even greater. The benefit surpasses the harm done by far. If someone inflicts a slight injury on me and another compensates me richly for this, what cause for complaint do I have? It is as if a thief had stolen ten florins from me and a rich

man reimbursed me with one hundred florins. Therefore when the devil kills my body with all sorts of evil, Christ again restores this to me in a state much more glorious, beautiful, and brilliant than the bright sun. Therefore we must not be concerned about our reluctance to die, but against this we must vividly picture the happiness and the joy that will be ours in yonder life. This will be inexpressibly greater and more glorious than the damage and the woe which we now suffer from Adam. (Luther)

This clause must not be understood in a universalistic sense. Only “those who belong to Christ” (15:23) through baptismal incorporation (“we all were baptized with one Spirit into one body,” 12:13) and by faith will receive the gift of resurrection to eternal life. Unbelievers too will be raised bodily but they will be cast into the lake of fire, which is, “the second death” (Rev 20:14-15; cf Dan 12:1-3), (CC p. 569)

15:23 *each in his own turn.*† Christ, the firstfruits, was raised in his own time in history (c. A.D. 30), and those who are identified with Christ through faith will be raised at his second coming. His resurrection is the pledge that ours will follow. (CSB)

ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ τάγματι—The word *τάγμα* is related to words like *τάσσω*, *ὑποτάσσω*, and *τάξις*, all of which have to do with “order.” A *τάγμα* can designate a military division; a group like the Sadducees or Essenes; or a position someone assumes, a rank. Here the context (“firstfruits, then ... then”) seems to require the meaning listed under BAGD, s.v. *τάγμα*, 2: “order, turn, arrangement.” (CC p. 567)

That is what is meant here when we read: “each in his own order.” These words differentiate between His resurrection and ours. For the order demands that He be the first; He must blaze the trail and produce life. After that He will gather all those who are His members and belong to the resurrection, one after another, so that they all come forth together on one day appointed by Him and live with Him eternally. (Luther)

Paul goes on to encourage the Corinthians to be patient. The end is not yet; their loved ones must still rest in the grave for a time. But everything will surely happen in its proper order. Christ’s resurrection is the great first step, the firstfruits holding the promise of everything else. Then His resurrection leaven will work through the whole church lump, as those who belong to Him (cf. Gal 5:24) will be raised when He descends from heaven on the Last Day (1 Thess 4:16). At no point in 1 Cor 15:2-28 does Paul refer to the fate of unbelievers; his concern is to bring comfort and hope to the believers (cf 1 Thess 4:18). (CC p. 569)

WHEN HE COMES – Gk *parousia*; commonly described a royal visit. Used 18 times in the NT for Christ’s reappearing in glory. (TLsB)

παρουσία—Of its twenty-four occurrences in the NT, *παρουσία* is used six times of the arrival or physical presence of people (e.g., Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, 16:17), and eighteen times of Christ’s second coming in glory—its meaning here, which the English transliteration “parousia” conveys. Deissmann showed that the word was commonly used for a royal visit. (CC p. 567)

BELONG TO HIM – The dead in Christ. (TLSB)

15:24 *the end*. The second coming of Christ and all the events accompanying it. This includes his handing over the kingdom to the Father, following his destroying all dominion, authority and power of the persons and forces who oppose him. (CSB)

τὸ τέλος—J. Weiss and H. Lietzmann held the view that τὸ τέλος here means a third group or τάγμα after Christ and the redeemed. But J. Hering has shown that τέλος never means a group of people. τὸ τέλος means “the end,” particularly in the sense of God’s great goal or purpose of redemptive history. (CC p. 567)

All things on earth will come to an end, and that which we together with all saints have desired and waited for since the beginning of the world will be ushered in, namely, that God Himself will be Lord alone and rule alone in us, His children. To this rule there will be no end. He Himself explains what He means with the end when He says that He will abolish every rule and power and will alone be all in all. (Luther)

HE HANDS OVER – Christ, as a conquering general, now wars against sin, death, and the power of the devil. He will present His conquest to His Father, who has given Him authority to wage this war (v 28). (TLSB)

ὅταν παραδιδῶ ... ὅταν καταργήσῃ—The change from the present subjunctive παραδιδῶ in the first clause to the aorist subjunctive καταργήσῃ in the second may be significant; the aorist here indicates prior action. Thus Christ’s subjugation of the powers will precede his delivering the kingdom to the Father. The kingdom (βασιλεία, 15:24) is the *activity* of ruling, as indicated by the *verb* βασιλεύω in 15:25. (CC p. 567)

At the appointed time, *then* Christ’s second coming will usher in the consummation of the age (1 Cor 15:24). The conjunction “then” (15:24) does not necessarily indicate that there will be a marked interval between his return and his handing over the kingdom to the Father. Rather, the triumphant Messiah may be compared to a nobleman who had journeyed to a far country to receive a kingdom and then to return (Luke 19:12). All authority had been entrusted to him for this assignment (Matthew 11:27; 28:1). In the course of His campaigns against the enemies of the kingdom, he had bound up the “strong man” (Satan) and plundered his goods (Mark 3:22-27), so that Satan’s former possessions now belong to the conqueror. The He hands over His people to His God and father, having deposed all spiritual and temporal authorities and powers (1 Cor. 15:24). (CC p. 569)

TO GOD THE FATHER – τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί—Literally this phrase reads “to the God and Father.” This is a good example of Sharp’s rule: “When the copulative καὶ connects two nouns of the same case, ... of personal description, ... if the article ... precedes the first of the said nouns or particles, and is not repeated before the second noun or particle, the latter always relates to the same person.” (CC p. 567)

There is no personal pronoun “his” in the Greek phrase. But Jesus often referred to God as “my God” (e.g., Mt 27:46) and “my Father” (e.g., Mt 10:32). Since the plural pronoun ἡμῶν (“our”) is not used, Paul probably has in mind Jesus’ unique relationship with the Father. That relationship is indicated by inserting “his” in the translation above. (CC p. 568)

ALL DOMINION, AUTHORITY AND POWER – Spiritual powers that manifest themselves in sinful institutions and orders on earth. (TLSB)

The texts parallel to 15:24 make it clear Paul has in mind primarily hostile spiritual powers: the devil and his forces (Cf. Eph 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12). But his terminology is comprehensive, and he may well have been thinking also of hostile human authorities: kings, rules, and all anti-Christian forces who under the influence of demonic forces range themselves against the Lord and His Anointed. (CC p. 570)

Psalm 2; Acts 4:25–28; 2 Thess 2:8; Rev 19:19. Revelation portrays the anti-Christian forces as consisting of an unholy trinity, composed of Satan—the dragon (Revelation 12)—and two beasts (Revelation 13). The second beast later becomes “the false prophet” (Rev 16:13; 19:20; 20:10) and also the “harlot” (Rev 17:1, 5, 15–16; 19:2). The harlot riding the beast represents Babylon (Rev 17:1–6), which would refer to Rome, and to every oppressive power, especially when a false religious power unites with a governmental power to persecute the church. See the commentary on Rev 17:1–6 and the excursus “Is the Harlot the Antichrist?” in L. Brighton, *Revelation*, 435–45, 481–83. (CC p. 570)

Hays finds in the terms “ruler,” “authority,” and “power” (1 Cor 15:24) not only a reference to “cosmic spheres or forces” but also “concrete political implications” (*First Corinthians*, 265). While Hays’ suggestion that this text has “political implications” and that Paul’s doctrine of the resurrection is “subversive” outruns the evidence, he is probably right in maintaining that Paul would include among the powers whose days are numbered “the ideology of imperial Rome” with its cities “replete with statues and temples dedicated to the glory of the Roman rulers.” (CC p. 570)

Christ’s triumph over these powers (1 Cor 15:25) fulfilled God’s plan as it had been laid down in Ps 110:1. David says: The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.” (CC p. 570)

Paul cites the psalm freely to show the divinely ordained necessity that Christ should triumph over death and ascend to the Father’s right hand, where he is enthroned and rules in the midst of his defeated foes (Ps 110:2). (CC p. 570)

Note how Paul differs from LXX Ps 109:1 (MT/ET 110:1) by inserting πάντα (“all his enemies”) and by altering the LXX’s ὑποπόδιον (“footstool”) to ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας (“under the/his feet”). Paul may have effected these changes in order to make Psalm 110 (cited in 1 Cor 15:25) and Psalm 8 (cited in 1 Cor 15:27) echo one another according to the rabbinic method of *gezerah shawah* (“equal category”). Compare the citation of both Ps 110:1 and Ps 8:5–7 in close proximity in Heb 1:13–2:9 and in early Christian writings. See, for example, D. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon,

1973). On *gezerah shawah* (גְּזֵרַת שָׁוָה), see R. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, second ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1999) 20. (CC p. 570)

His regency would continue until *all* his enemies had been subjugated completely. Paul adds “all” to the quote in 1 Cor 15:25 and places “all” first in the Greek of 15:27 to emphasize it. (CC p. 570)

15:25-27 *He. Christ. last enemy ... death.* Contrary to notions of death as friendly and suicide as a solution, the Bible describes death as our enemy. The Lord created us for life, not death. Death is destroyed by the gift of eternal life in Christ. *subjection under His feet.* Paul applies these verses to Jesus. He is the man by whom God fulfills His purposes for all humankind. “There is and remains in Christ only one divine omnipotence, power, majesty, and glory, which is peculiar to the divine nature alone. But it shines, manifests, and exercises itself fully—yet voluntarily—in, with, and through the received, exalted human nature in Christ. In glowing iron there are not two kinds of power to shine and burn. But the power to shine and to burn is a property of the fire. Since the fire is united with the iron, it manifests and exercises this power to shine and to burn in, with, and through the glowing iron. From this union also the glowing iron has the power to shine and to burn without changing the essence and the natural properties of fire and iron. This guides how we understand the testimonies of Scripture that speak of the majesty to which the human nature in Christ is exalted” (FC SD VIII 66–67). (TLSB)

15:25 *For he must reign.*† During this process of Christ’s destroying all dominion and handing over the kingdom to the Father, Christ must reign (Rev 20:1–6). Some take this to mean that Christ will literally reign with his saints for 1,000 years on the earth. But this refers to Christ’s reign over the course of history and in the lives of his people, who are spiritually raised, or born again. This reign is viewed as continuing throughout the present age. (CSB)

under his feet. An OT figure for complete conquest. Verse 25 is an allusion to Ps 110:1 (cf. Mt 22:44). (CSB)

Paul cites the psalm freely to show the divinely ordained necessity that Christ should triumph over death and ascend to the Father’s right hand, where He is enthroned and rules in the midst of His defeated foes. His regency would continue until all His enemies had been subjected completely. Paul adds “all” to the quote and places “all” first in the Greek of 15:27 to emphasize it. (CC p. 570)

For through the Gospel and through Christendom He strikes the factious spiritually, repels the devil, dethrones the tyrants, subdues the raging and raving of the world, deprives sin and death of their strength and might, etc. This is His work which He pursues and in which He engages until the Last Day, only that He now does this piecemeal and by degrees. Then, however, He will knock the bottom out of the barrel and put an end to everything at one time. (Luther)

GOSPEL – Matthew 25:31-46

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ ³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ ⁴⁰ “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’ ⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ ⁴⁴ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ ⁴⁵ “He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ ⁴⁶ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

25:31–46† The great Shepherd who separates the sheep from the goats (v. 32) once said: “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters” (12:30). The separation takes place before any deeds are mentioned. Whether a person has been against him or for him has been documented by that person’s deeds—deeds of mercy done or left undone. The merciful will find mercy in the judgment, as Jesus had promised (5:7)—and mercy it is; for the Judge buries all their failures in forgiving silence and remembers only their deeds of mercy. The unmerciful have committed themselves to the unmerciful enemy of God and share his doom, that *eternal fire* (v. 41) which God did not design for human beings. (CSB)

Kingdom of God parables are abundant in the chapters before our text. In ch 24 Jesus speaks about the signs of the end of the age. In 24:36 Jesus talks about the day and hour unknown. Ch 25 contains three end-time parables. The parable of the sheep and the goats is the last of the three. The chapter begins with the parable of the ten virgins followed by the parable of the talents. These are, of course, popular sermon texts for the Last Sunday of the Church Year. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

All of this falls within the last week of Jesus’ life. It makes sense that these teachings of Jesus are quickly followed by events that lead to his cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

25:31 WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMES – The only element unknown to us is the time.

“Son of Man” recalls the prophecy of Dan 7:13–14, in which all nations are gathered and the Son is seated before them on his throne (Dan 7:9). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 4)

ho huios tou anthrōpou, translated “Son of Man.” This is a self-designation Jesus uses many times in the New Testament. The phrase occurs 85 times in the New Testament. It occurs four times outside of the Gospels: once in Acts, once in Hebrews, and twice in Revelation. Most occurrences are in Matthew, with 30. Other Gospels have fewer: 14 in Mark; 26 in Luke; and 11 in John. However, the large number is indicative of a common self-description of our Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

In his commentary *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), Leon Morris states that the first use of Son of Man is found in Matthew 8:20. “It is a literal translation of an Aramaic expression commonly used with the meaning ‘man.’ . . . The expression has caused endless comment.” In Matthew it appears for earthly mission, his rejection and suffering, and for his future glory. “The expression was not an accepted messianic designation, which makes Jesus’ extensive use of it rather puzzling” (p 201). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

The reckoning as it will finally be made is here described; for the day of doom is inevitable. Another impressive passage, awesome in its very simplicity, in the absence of all seeking for effect. He who was within two days to celebrate His last Passover on earth and then to be crucified, here fitly sets forth the glory of His triumph, as Jerome remarks. In glory, the glory of heaven, the glory of His Father, the glory which was His before the world began, before He entered into the weakness and lowliness of our sinful flesh, He will come, accompanied by all the angels, as His messengers, ministers, and courtiers. (Kretzmann)

SIT ON HIS THRONE – Cf Dn 7:13–14, where the Son of Man is presented as holy but never actually sits on heaven’s throne. Here, the Son of Man sits in glory as God. (TLSB)

kathisei epi thronou doxēs autou, translated “he will sit upon his throne of glory.” R. C. H. Lenski, in his *Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1943) states that our Lord’s throne of glory is at the right hand of God the Father. As the Son of Man, he made his throne of glory the cross for our sake and our salvation. Those with the gift of faith in Jesus will recognize the scope of his throne. It is a place he *vacated* to become the Son of Man (pp 986–87). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

25:32 NATIONS WILL BE GATHERED BEFORE HIM – The righteous should have no fears of not being included and the unrighteous will have no choice.

Every single human being who ever lived or ever will live is going to be present. No excuses, No exceptions. It staggers the imagination. “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake” (Daniel 12:2). Just think what it would be like to be in the Arlington National Cemetery when Jesus comes back! (PBC)

Sheep and goats are not described as being judged on this day, but rather separated. Accordingly, this parable is not primarily about judgment but about the revelation and public vindication of true believers. (TLSB)

I conclude that “all the nations” gathered before the royal Son of Man are all the people who have ever lived on earth, with all to whom the Good News of God’s reign has been proclaimed. (CC)

HE WILL SEPARATE THE PEOPLE – This will be done on the basis of the faith that was given to Christians and which they retain to the end. This separation is done before any deeds are mentioned. It is and will be a great comfort to all believers.

This reflects the fact that “nations” will not be judged as wholes; rather, the individuals within them are judged. (CC)

25:33 SHEEP ON HIS RIGHT AND GOATS ON HIS LEFT – In the ancient world, the right hand was regularly associated with privilege or honor. (TLSB)

Those on his right are repeatedly called “the righteous.” They are believers – who else can they be? Here are the individuals from among all the nations who have become Jesus’ disciples because the Good News of God’s reign in Jesus has been preached to them (24:14; 26:13; 28:19). (This unit simply does not address the question of individuals who have never heard the Good News. Neither does it offer any support for the idea that some would have a “second chance” after death to hear and believe the Gospel or that is any loophole that would exempt anyone from participation in this judgment.) On his left, by contrast, are the people from among all the nations who have not responded to the preaching of the Gospel in faith and discipleship. They are the “accursed” (25:41). (CC)

ta men probata ek dexiōn autou, translated “sheep out of his right,” and *ta de epiphia ex euōnumōn*, translated “goats out of his left.” R. T. France (*The Gospel according to Matthew* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985]) states that sheep and goats are hard to tell apart. The parable of the weeds in Mt 13:24–30 provides a good analogy to Jesus’ use of sheep and goats (p 356). In the parable of the weeds, Jesus uses the word *zizania*, translated “weeds” (a weed that resembles wheat), in both the parable and in his explanation of the parable in Mt 13:36–40. Sheep are an Old Testament image of God’s people. Right and left equals favor and disfavor or good or bad fortune. Jesus the Good Shepherd never uses the word *goat* in any of his other teachings. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

A shepherd can easily tell the difference between a sheep and a goat. So, on the Last Day, it will be simple matter for Jesus to do the task that He declined to let His disciples do earlier in Matthew 13:28-30. (PBC)

That is the first act of the Judgment, the separating, the fixing of an impassable gulf. The sheep are those that followed the great Shepherd, Jesus, willingly, that heard His voice, the believers; the goats are those that refused obedience to His gentle rule, that were disobedient to the Gospel, the unbelievers, the hypocrites among the Christians, the entire godless world. (Kretzmann)

25:34–40 Rewards in the kingdom of heaven are given to those who serve without thought of reward. There is no hint of merit here, for God gives out of grace, not debt. (CSB)

Your present justification is the revelation of the Divine counsel, and a preparation for future glory...Let none, therefore, doubt that he is loved who already loves. The love of God freely follows our love which it preceded. (TLSB)

25:34 KING WILL SAY TO THOSE – Fitting title, given the coronation theme in Dn 7. (TLSB)

blessed by my Father.† God’s work of blessing began in his creation (Ge 1:22), continued in history (Ge 12:2), was active in the worship and life of his people (Nu 6:24; Eph 1:3) and comes to its eternal climax here. (CSB)

Note the sequence: first the call to the sheep with the granting of the inheritance, and then the description of their works. Blessed is the key. The sheep are called that first, not as a result of any works, but solely because of the Father’s grace. Blessed is a Gospel word, not a Law word. (Concordia Pupil Resources – Volume 3, Part 4)

TAKE YOUR INHERITANCE – klaronomasate can only mean that they receive a gift attained for them by Christ. See Romans 8:17.

No one earns an inheritance. Inheritances are given because of who someone is, not because of what someone has done. (Concordia Pupil Resources – Volume 3, Part 4)

KINGDOM PREPARED – St. Bernard of Clairvaux: “Your present justification is the revelation of the Divine counsel, and a preparation for future glory.... Let none, therefore, doubt that he is loved who already loves. The love of God freely follows our love which it preceded” (SLSB, p 155). (TLSB)

In this picture, the Judge stands out most strongly: the former lowly and despised Nazarene, now the King of glory, King of kings, and Lord of lords. This King calls those at His right hand the blessed of His Father, since they by faith received the benediction of the Father, by which all good gifts were imparted to them, and by which they became the children of God. Having continued in this faith, they are now, spiritually considered,

become of age. They are to enter upon the undisputed possession and enjoyment of their inheritance, of the estate which has been prepared and ready for them since the foundation of the world, since the eternal counsel of God for the salvation of mankind was made, Eph. 1, 4. It is a kingdom which they are about to inherit, for they have been made kings and priests unto God, His Father, Rev. 1:6. And the reason for this wonderful gift? (Kretzmann)

One of endless, heavenly glory. (CB)

25:35-36 This story does not teach that people are justified before God on the basis of works. The sheep receive their blessing and inheritance from the Father before a single word about their good works is spoken. Scripture teaches that people do good works in God's sight only after they have come to faith and been justified by Christ. Good works are the result of salvation, not its cause. See Ap V 250–51. (TLSB)

And the reason for this wonderful gift? A reward for their faith, as shown in the ordinary, everyday deeds of kindness to the lowly brethren of Christ: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, showing hospitality to the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned; outward expressions of love flowing from the love of Christ, as an evidence of faith. Christ expects no heroic acts. He demands no miracles, but He will judge the world in righteousness, making these deeds of kindness and charity the basis of His judgment; for it is impossible to perform even the smallest act of kindness in His spirit without faith in Him in the heart. (Kretzmann)

Note the parallels to the Beatitudes (Mt 5:3–12). There, as here, it is the Lord himself who suffers the various deprivations, and the saints are those who have suffered with him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 4)

25:35 FOR I WAS – gar is evidential and not causal. The works of the blessed were evidence, of belonging to Christ.

INVITED ME IN – Hospitality is proof of true love.

25:36 IN PRISON – Here it means utter destitution.

25:37-40 The humility of the believers may cause them to disclaim any personal knowledge of Him and therefore of any personal service rendered to Him; but Christ quickly instructs them on this point, telling them that such works, done without all ostentation, without any idea of personal gain, are in reality the truest service they can render to Him. (Kretzmann)

25:37 THE RIGHTEOUS – dikaios is a forensic word. Their sins are not mentioned. Only deeds done in faith are mentioned.

Interestingly, those called righteous are surprised at what is being said about them. Far from being boastful about the good deeds worked in them by God's Spirit, they are completely ignorant of them. (TLSB)

hoi dikaios, "the righteous." Those on Jesus' right have already been righteous, apart from these good works just announced, by faith in Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 4)

WHEN DID WE – Christians don't dwell on their deed of love. The Christian's whole life is summed up in "faith which works through love," Galatians 5:6. Through the Gospel he lives in constant freedom in his conscience.

Humility astonished at high honor put on poor services. (CB)

25:38 *welcome*. This word is particularly connected to the early Christian practice of providing hospitality for traveling missionaries. Examples of hospitality are found in Ac 16:14–15; 17:5–9; 18:7–8; 21:8. (TLSB)

25:39 IN PRISON – This held special significance for the first Christians, because so many of them, particularly their leaders, were arrested for the faith (e.g., Acts 5:18; 12:3-4; 16:23). (TLSB)

25:40 I TELL YOU THE TRUTH – This is used of an unalterable truth uttered by the incarnate Christ.

Upon as much as. Means "as much as," referring to everything that the sheep did for the least of Jesus' brothers. It is very difficult to imagine Jesus speaking to the righteous or the accursed and telling them that how they treated individuals in their midst (or something like that) serves as the criterion for judgment. (CC)

DID FOR ONE OF THE LEAST – Good deeds come one by one to one by one. Unbelievers start with the delusion of big things which attract attention but will be rejected. Believers start with little things for the least but do not dwell on them.

Important theme in Mt is that Jesus is Immanuel, "God with us" (1:23; 18:20; 28:20). This verse stresses that Jesus is with the Christian community in such a way that we serve Him when we serve others. (TLSB)

YOU DID FOR ME – Expressive of the intimate and endearing union of Christ and His people. (CB)

25:41 ON HIS LEFT – Before God there is no predetermined "left hand" meaning eternal damnation, but only a "right hand" signifying life everlasting. It is really upsetting of God's plan that "any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9). Since, however men willfully transgressed his commandments, punishment became necessary, justice must be executed. Sternly the Judge addresses himself to those at the left.

PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL – Hell was not prepared for human beings. Those who reject the Lord will go there because the wicked cannot stay with the righteous. Cf Rv 20:10. (TLSB)

God does not say “prepared from the beginning of the world.” God’s original plan did not call for the damnation of anyone. The left hand was a later addition, prepared only for the devil.

Some people will go to hell. God “wants all men to saved” (1 Timothy 2:4), but the teaching of Jesus makes it clear that God will not get all that He wants. God’s original purpose in creating hell was not to prepare a place for sinful people. No, hell was “prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41). Nevertheless, the goats who are on the King’s left will join the devil and his angels in eternal flames. (Perhaps this explains why the goat’s head has become a Satanic symbol.) (PBC)

A fearful arraignment and a just of those on the left hand of the King: Instead of the "Blessed" which they expected a "Cursed," instead of the "Come" a "Depart from Me." Several very important points: He does not say, Cursed of My Father, for they have brought the curse upon themselves. The everlasting fire was not prepared for them, but "really only for the devil and his angels. And this fire was not prepared from the beginning of the world, God had no counsel according to which He willed the damnation of any man. They have no one to blame but themselves, this just sentence strikes them by no one's fault but their own. (Kretzmann)

25:42-46 fearful arraignment and a just of those on the left hand of the King: Instead of the "Blessed" which they expected a "Cursed," instead of the "Come" a "Depart from Me." Several very important points: He does not say, Cursed of My Father, for they have brought the curse upon themselves. The everlasting fire was not prepared for them, but "really only for the devil and his angels. And this fire was not prepared from the beginning of the world, God had no counsel according to which He willed the damnation of any man. They have no one to blame but themselves, this just sentence strikes them by no one's fault but their own. (Kretzmann)

25:42–43 The undone works are only a symptom of the real problem: lack of faith. If they had called on the Lord in faith, He would have forgiven them, prepared them, and completed good works in them. See LC I 191–92. (TLSB)

25:42 YOU GAVE ME NOTHING – The humble deed of the blessed are evidence of what they are. Likewise, the total lack of even humble deeds of the cursed are evidence of what they are.

25:44 *minister to You?* Offer service, particularly in physical needs. Cf Heb 11:6. (TLSB)

25:45 YOU DID NOT DO FOR ME – Men who neglect the wants of Christ’s people, neglect Him. (CB)

Apart from faith in Christ and His forgiveness, all of our sins and shortcomings remain offenses against God, for which He shall hold us fully accountable. (TLSB)

25:46 ETERNAL PUNISHMENT – The punishment of the wicked is justice because they rejected God.

RIGHTEOUS TO ETERNAL LIFE – The blessedness of the righteous is just because by their faith they are *oi dikaioi*.

The difference between those who are in Christ and those who stand outside of His forgiveness cannot be stated more clearly. The difference is as great as heaven and hell. See AC XVII. (TLSB)

25:31–46 On the Last Day, Jesus will separate true believers from hypocrites and those who reject Him. The faithful will be vindicated and welcomed into heaven, while unbelievers will be condemned. Having received forgiveness through faith in Christ, God's flock eagerly await the day on which they shall be publicly vindicated and receive eternal life. • Grant us a faith that perseveres until the end, O Lord. Move us by Your Spirit, that our good works continually glorify You and benefit our neighbors. Amen. (TLSB)