



Redeemer Lutheran Church of Leisure World

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Reflections on WORSHIP and DISCIPLESHIP

by Margo Geesing

“Endings”

November begins and ends with great celebrations. We begin with All Saints Sunday when we remember those who have entered into the Church Triumphant during this previous year *Violet Schwabenland, Lynda Elmer and George Koehm*. We pray for the families and friends of these new saints in heaven. They are among the communion of saints we profess our belief in at every service in the Creed. They are the saints in heaven and we are saints in the making. We end the month in our final celebration of this Church year with Christ the King Sunday. This is when we recognize Jesus’s triumph over death and coming into his reign in heaven. He has finished his earthly visit and has returned to his Father. He has fulfilled his mission from the Father to become our paschal lamb; our sin offering through his life, death, and resurrection. When we see him again it will be when we are with him in heaven or when he comes again, not as a babe but in his power and might. The Gospel lessons for this month are focused on how we as Christians should be living our lives.

On All Saints Sunday we hear Matthew 5:1-12, the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are the road map to living The Ten Commandments and fulfilling the Golden Rule which we read in Matthew 7:12 “*So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*” and is expanded on in Matthew 22:37-40: ³⁷*Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”*³⁸*This is the first and greatest commandment.* ³⁹*And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’* ⁴⁰*All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”* These guidelines should be the center of our lives. The Beatitudes are a covenant between us and God. It lists the qualities that we are called to have as Christians.

The second Sunday of November we have Jesus the Storyteller come back. He is trying to prepare the people but most especially his disciples [of which we are] for living their call to join him in heaven. This week Jesus reminds us we do not know when he will return nor when we will be called home so we need to be prepared at all times. We can not wait idle and figuring we have more time to prepare: pray, care, give, forgive, love, or whatever. We don’t know when this will happen.

The third Sunday is a continuation of the Gospel from last week. Jesus gives another comparison. Last week was about preparing. This week it is about using our gifts for God's greater glory. We are all called to use our time, talents, and treasure for God. This is called Stewardship. We talk a lot about stewardship in society in reference to taking care of the world but Jesus calls us to something more; something better. We are called to be good stewards of the things God gives us but we are also supposed to give back to God through the world and the church from those gifts. This is not an either / or thing either. It's an AND thing. You are supposed to be sharing time, talents, AND treasure. Just because you give in one area, it doesn't let you off in the others! You may have more time than treasure so, maybe you spend more time on giving back to God, but you do need to part with some of that treasure, too. *"I have no talents so I will not try to do anything but I'll pay for whatever."* No one has no talents: it's still an AND proposition [you probably have a talent for planning ahead or organizing!] *"I'm just so busy all the time I have no time to help!"* I really understand this one! Still, I will say, if you are too busy to spend a bit of time for God, you really are too busy and probably NEED some time with God. There is a balancing point with all of this and you need to decide what that is in your own life. But: you do need to do all three.

The last Sunday in November is the last Sunday in this Church year and we celebrate Christ the King. We hear the Gospel of the sheep and the goats. This is one of those points where Catholics and Lutherans sort of differ on things. For Catholics this is Gospel passage is referred to as the Corporal Works of Mercy [we also have the Spiritual Works of Mercy] or Final Judgement. I KNOW: Lutherans believe in the 5 Solas of the Reformation: Scripture alone, grace alone, faith alone, in Christ alone, and for God's Glory alone. Yes, and / but ... Yes, through Scripture we come to know God the Father through his Son Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Grace and Faith are gifts given by God alone. Salvation comes from Christ alone. What we do is for the glory of God. BUT true faith calls us to action. These actions are reflected in this Gospel passage. These actions are a continuation of Jesus's works while he was here. He fed and cared for people all the time. He tells us to do as he did. It's like when you are so happy you can't help but smile. When we are so full of God's grace and have so much faith that we can't help but to help others; especially when we do these things without a thought of our own reward or honor but for God's praise and glory.