

Sermon for the Last Sunday of the Church Year

“And I, the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it.”

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‘When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.’

Something has changed. No longer does the Lord speak, saying, *‘The kingdom of heaven will be like...’* Now there is no ‘like’. There is no simile. There is no metaphor. *‘When the Son of man shall come.’*

He speaks of the end of all things, the consummation of the epic of time, the end and completion of all creation.

It is the Last Sunday of the Church Year. We now hear our Lord speak of the day of his Coming, of his Appearing. Of that day when His work of our salvation shall finally cease, and, as it is written on the seventh day of creation, *‘He shall cease from all his labor.’* For *‘The Father worketh still, and even Christ still works’*, *‘While it is still day, before the night comes, when no one shall work.’*

The parable is simple, though many find it confusing. *‘The Son of man shall come[...and he shall sit upon the throne of his glory.’* There he will divide *‘his sheep from the goats.’*

‘His sheep’ it is written, not, the sheep. And *‘the goats’* it is written, not *‘his goats.’*

For, though the sheep know not their blessedness, they are blessed of the Lord, and though the goats know not their damnation, they are damned of the Lord.

Strangely, *the*

Lord calls his sheep, yet they know him not. They know not when they have fed him, and given him drink. They know not when they have visited him and clothed him. But the Lord tells them: *‘Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.’*

Who are these *brethren*? It is written: *‘And he stretched out his hand to his disciples, and said, Behold, my brethren!’*

The brethren are none other than those who hold the Apostolic ministry, who bear and preach the word of the Lord, announcing his call to repentance, announcing his call to forgiveness, announcing his call to redemption, announcing his call to eternal beatitude, the unending glory, to the life of the world to come, to paradise, to God, who is *the beginning and the end*, the source and completion of all our being and life.

The Apostolic

ministry, who bear and preach the word. To those who have fed and clothed that ministry, to those who have visited them and heard their word; those, who Christ the Good Shepherd calls *his sheep*, *‘shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.’*

Now you may be

thinking, ‘Is Pastor Fields shamelessly saying, that since he is a minister of the word, we should be feeding him and visiting him and giving him drink and clothing, lest we be damned forever?’

But who am I? I am a slave, and a link in the great chain which leads back to the holy martyred Apostles. Forget me. For this reason, a minister wears the black, for this reason he dons the vestments and shrouds his countenance, that you might forget him, and see in him, in me, not any person, whether you call him by any given name, but that great chain which reaches back to the anchor of the Apostles, to those men despised by the world, *the least of the Lord’s brethren*.

I am but a mouth; they are the Word. To them the Lord bids you listen, to them the Lord bids you to welcome, to feed their Word with all the nourishment of faith, to clothe it with the raiments of righteousness, to give to it the drink of baptism, and of blood, which from this font and altar you have received, and shall receive evermore.

*'When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked and clothed thee?
Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?'*

Have you not come here on this last of days? Did you not hear the Lord's brother Ezekiel in silence, following his every word? Did you not welcome Saint Paul into your mind and soul as he preached to you the Lord's coming? Do you not now visit the Son of Man hidden in bread and wine, even as he visits you, speaking in parables, today?

The past few weeks we have preached to you the coming of the Almighty, that you should not take it lightly, that you should not become complacent; that you should *work out your salvation with fear and trembling*, trusting not in outward forms; trusting not in worldly accolades, but having your life enlightened by the faith of Christ alone. For the coming of the Lord may be a good thing, but it is not a safe thing. Thus did we bid you *'watch.'*

But Advent is upon us. 'The Lord is come,' and so we proclaim 'Joy to the world.'

No longer do I say to you *'watch'* but *'Behold.'*

'For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.'

*I will feed my
flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God*

*I will seek
that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.'*

'For then Christ shall reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.'

The last enemy

that shall be destroyed is death.

For the Son of

David shall return; and death, which we call the end, shall no longer be called the end, but the eternal beginning; this day, which we call the last day, shall become the unending day of the Lord, with brightness that shall not give way to gloom, with day that shall not give way to night. [A morning that shall have no twilight.]

For he hath put

all things under his feet. [...] And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.'

In the beginning,

the Lord made the heavens and the earth. He made light, *and there was evening, and there was morning, the first day.* And he made skies and the seas, *and there was evening, and there morning, the second day.* And he made land and all that grows therefrom, *and there was evening, and there was morning, the third day.* And he made the stars and all the glories of the heavens, *and there was evening, and there was morning, the fourth day.* And he made all life of the sea and of the air, *and there was evening, and there was morning, the fifth day.* And he made all life of the land, and fashioned his own image, man; *and there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

And *'the word became flesh, and dwelt among us.'* 'And the Son was made man and was crucified under Pontius Pilate.' That our human nature might be redeemed, that it might be complete, that man as God meant him to be, whole and blameless in his sight, might be created; and Christ be conceived as *'the firstborn among brethren.'*

And there was evening and there was morning, the last day.

'And the Lord rested from all his labors. And behold, it was very good.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

*Sermon Texts: Ezekiel 34:11-16,
20-24; 1 Corinthians 15; 20-28; Matthew 25:31-46.*