

Sermon for the Last Sunday of the Church Year

'Thus says the Lord God, I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey.'

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Beloved, it is the Last Day of the Church Year, the day in which we behold the Great Day of the Lord, the day that is *ruin and destruction* to the faithless, but is unending joy to the *sheep of His flock*.

The day when our Lord shall *search for his sheep, and seek them out*. For we *have been scattered*. By the trial and tribulation of life, by its distractions and temptations, and by the torment of our enemy the devil, we, His flock, have been divided from one another, and we have become divided within ourselves.

Our own souls are riven and split apart, part of it wandering in the godless world, wandering to find the things of this world, part of it grazing in the New Heavens, feeding upon the infinite delight of God.

But even as our Lord gathers His flock, that is scattered and lost, so shall He gather our hearts, and bind them together, and make us whole; our Christ, *who makes all things new*.

We have drifted in foreign lands, *these countries*, for to us, we who have been baptized, there is no home here, only a shelter, given to us by the grace of God; a Church, a priest, a meal, a meal of the Son's body and blood. Here we have room and board. There, we shall have a home. No longer shall we roam this place, which is no home. We will look upon the New Jerusalem, and say for the first time, 'this is my native land.'

And *He will feed us on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines. He will feed us with good pasture, and there we shall lie down*. For all that we pray for at every funeral, when we recite the Psalm, that *he maketh us to lie down in green pastures, that he prepareth a table before us*, we shall have. Indeed shall we lie

down, and for the first time in our life, truly rest; for the first time in our life, we shall truly feast, for we shall feast upon Him who is truly life, the Christ, who is *the way, the truth, and the life*, and through Him we shall be sustained for all of our days.

We who dwell in *clouds and thick darkness*, shall see the Sun, for there, there will be no night, but endless day, for the brightness of the face of Christ shall shine upon us forevermore. It shall bring warmth to our cold hearts, and sight to our blind eyes.

Our God declares *'I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured.'* For the world is overflowing with sadness; who has not been pierced by the misery of the sin of our neighbor? By the sin of our selves? But He *will bind up the injured. 'For the Lord is a great God.'*

When the *'Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, and sits upon his glorious throne.'* He shall speak to His faithful, saying *'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, I was a stranger, and you welcomed me, I was naked, and you clothed me, I was sick, and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'*

And you will answer, *'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked, and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'*

But have you not come into this simple house, and with your tithes, your labor, your presence, established an altar, upon which our Lord can dwell, and paraments, that it may not be naked, a roof, that it may not be destroyed? Has not Him who was a stranger to the two on the road to Emmaus, who in this world *had no place to lay his head*, entered this sanctuary endless times? Have you not received the Lord in His Word, His Body, His Blood, into yourself, and nourished Him there within your soul, sometimes in time of famine, sometimes in time of plenty?

The Lord is imprisoned in this world, as are all who serve him, and yet you come Sunday upon Sunday, and visit Him. Have you not had pity upon Him, and upon

His cross? This is because He has had pity upon you, lost and scattered sheep; injured and broken. He has had pity upon you, and for that reason you are here, for *you love Him because He first loved you.*

It may be hard to accept, we, who know our sin, our evil, so well, that *we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.*

But the sheep do not seek out a shepherd, but a shepherd His sheep. Therefore, do not ever doubt the grace and mercy of God, that He has made us His own, Our Good Shepherd.

Do not ever doubt the wisdom of His will, and the glory of His ways. Simply believe what He has said to you:

'I will rescue my flock.'

'I am the Lord; I have spoken.'

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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.