

## Preaching on Christ the King Sunday

John – just some initial musing regarding “doing and judgment about doing enough without being legalistic”. Why not pose your questioning about “how does one exhort without falling back into the law” with the Bible class next Monday. They are sharp and it would prove a shared learning experience how to relate law and gospel to one’s life? Thinking about this last evening a theme came to mind, namely, **SAVED TO SERVE** That, I think, places the emphasis on grace and the joyful response of the redeemed to unmerited forgiveness. This would lead more to encouragement of the faithful to exhibit love to the other rather more than a preachment to live the Christian life. I took a cursory look at the Scriptures for Christ the King Sunday. Ezekiel - Israel are the sheep and it is God who does the searching for the sheep The sheep “lie down in good grazing land – rich pasture-“ The fat and strong sheep who oppress the other weaker sheep, that is “the sleek and strong I will destroy.” Verse 17 (not part of the reading) talks about the “rams and goats” as the powerful who oppress the weak. Ephesians points to faith in Christ as key resulting in “love – faith and love in Christ resulting in “love for all the saints (and) the glorious inheritance”. That inheritance finds fulfillment in the present age and also in the one to come (the “one to come” is realized on the Last Day – the *parouia*. Reading Matthew 25 what came to mind was Bach’s *Wachet auf Ruft uns die Stimme*. Be wide awake in expectation of the Last Day and the Judgment. We live lives as Saints saved to serve in joyful expectation of the coming of the Shepherd. It is faith in Christ that makes us sheep and not goats. Faith, then, demonstrated spontaneously without any regard for reward. Last week I was asked to deliver the homily for a diseased colleague at Concordia (first time delivering a homily in some three years) Romans 14: 7-8 as the text: “For none of us lives to himself alone., and none die to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.” Exegesis of this in part suggests that God is our master and, therefore, we no longer live or die to ourselves. The ego is humbled and our lives now center on the other and not merely self. Motivation now for action in life is over against the other. And that is serving the Lord (in serving “the least of these”) as giving God in Christ thanks for providing grace.

Regarding the Last Day and the Judgment. Sorting thru my father’s papers after his death the following handwritten note caught my attention. I have it displayed in my study all these years since 1978. It reads: “Luther could speak of the departed as being with the Lord as fully redeemed. That is because he saw God as above and outside of time. So then when we die we pass out of our time and arrive at the last day. In this sense there there is no time between death and the resurrection. Yet all of us reach the last Day together” . How comforting for those whose lives are “in Christ”.

Perhaps one of the most influential books shaping my approach to the relationship of law and gospel is a small pamphlet titled: **OUR CALLING : A Statement of the Relationship of Christian Faith and Christian Living** by Einar Billing. This is a translation from the Swedish (Lundensian School I suspect) by Conrad Burgendorff. (Augustana Book Concern, 1947). Introductory note states : “ He goes to the heart of the Christian faith and finds how the heart moves the hands of the disciple.” Following is a quote from Billing that has shaped my thinking: “Whoever knows Luther, even but partially, knows that his various thoughts do not lie alongside each other, like pearls on a string, held together only by common authority or perchance by a line of logical argument, but that they all, as tightly as the pedals of a rosebud, adhere to a common center, and radiate out like the rays of the sun from one glowing core, namely, the gospel of the forgiveness of sins. Anyone wishing to study Luther would indeed be in no peril of going astray were he to follow this rule: never believe you have a correct understanding of a thought of Luther before you have succeeded in reducing it to a simple corollary of the thought of the forgiveness of sins.”