

Homily. Solemnity of Christ the King. Year. A. 25/26 November 2023.

The gospel speaks about our future. It tells us about what will really matter at the end of time and in the final judgement. In this story Jesus is King over all, sorting and judging each person by what they have done or failed to do to help those in need. His judgement is based on their loving, kind and generous acts or on their selfish apathy and failure to help out.

There is another story about what the end times and the Reign of God will be like. We read this story in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Chapter 11. We hear that in the final days the wolf will live with the lamb, the panther with the kid goat and that the baby calf and the lion cub will feed together. This vision ends by telling us that all creatures and people will do no hurt or harm on God's Holy Mountain, for the country is filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters swell the sea.

This reading from Isaiah, used yearly in our Advent Season, is full of love, gentleness and peace. It's what I call a 'Lamb reading'. Yet, as I've said the gospel here differs in tone. It speaks of separating out sheep from goats, good from bad and of those who will receive their Kingdom heritage and those who won't. I call this a 'Lion reading'.

The Scriptures, just like any book or collection of books is full of stories, histories, songs, poems and prophecies, some of which are 'Lion-like' in their tone while others are more 'Lamb-like' in their message. The Bible truly is God's word to us, but this happens because it was written down by ordinary people like you and me who have great trouble being both Lion and Lamb at the same time. We oscillate, don't we, between judgemental

justice and manifest mercy, unable to find the right way to be both at once. We swing between bleating and roaring, between being gentle, understanding and forgiving and then laying down standards, drawing lines in the sand and demanding an accounting for behaviour. But God isn't like this at all, for it is God alone who combines in perfect balance both the Lamb and Lion. It's only God who can mix harmoniously manifold mercy with judicious judgement.

We see and hear this balance in Jesus parable today. All people are gathered with only one question to answer; What did you do or not do to help others along the road of life? Those who were unselfish and did help are fit to be welcomed into the Kingdom where Lions and Lambs live in peace. Those who thought only of themselves, not helping anyone along the way can't belong. They have shown by their apathy and lack of care for people in need that they simply aren't ready to fit into God's Kingdom of peace where even savage panthers and little kid goats get along. God doesn't even have to exclude these people; rather that have chosen to exclude themselves from their heritage of eternal life, joy and peace.

This is a good gift for us to receive now at the end of yet one more Church year. It sets us up beautifully for the hopeful expectancy of the coming Advent Season, when the King of the Universe is born to us as one of us humbly in a stable. It is he who is both Jesus and Lord, he who perfectly blends the Lion with the Lamb, thereby offering us his grace and his truth if we will only say yes and act accordingly.