

Sunday Sermon : November 26, 2017
Sermon Text: Ezekiel 34: 11-16, 23-24
Sermon Theme: Our King is Different.

¹¹ “ *For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them.* ¹² *As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.* ¹³ *I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land.* ¹⁴ *I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.* ¹⁵ *I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD.* ¹⁶ *I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.*

²³ *I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd.* ²⁴ *I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken.*

How was your Thanksgiving? Did you have a big meal? Did you have family over? Did you spend time with friends? Did you get to the store for some deals? Did you spend some time in prayer, thanking God for the blessings that he gives? Wait a minute, one of those things was a little bit different from the others. Did you catch it? You probably did.

We are very thankful for the long weekend, the big meal and the family. We have lots of fun eating, chatting, laughing and enjoying ourselves, but many times we forget that actual thankfulness has nothing to do with the food, family, or fun. There are times when even our Thanksgiving lacks true thanks to the one who gives the gifts that we receive every single day and are thankful for.

We have a God who is so different than any other god or ruler this world has ever known. We have a god who gives to us freely even though we do not deserve it. We have a god who truly deserves our thanks and praise. This morning we take a moment look at Christ our King and we will see he is different from the other kings and rulers of this world. We will take a moment to thank him because our King does things for us that no earthly king will do and he does things that we cannot do for ourselves.

The prophet Ezekiel wrote at dark time in the history of the nation of Judah. Because of their unbelief and wickedness, they had been overthrown and carried away to Babylon. During those early years, there was some hope among the people that they would quickly return to their homeland after a few years and be able to pick up where things left off. However, God had Ezekiel preach a very different message to them.

Ezekiel’s message had two parts. The first was to preach God’s judgment on the people’s disobedience and unbelief. There would be no early return, Jerusalem would fall and the temple would be destroyed by the invaders. Judah would be exiles away from their home for 70 years, just as God’s prophets had foretold.

But once the people that this was the LORD’s hand of judgment on them and they repented of their sins, then the LORD had Ezekiel preach a different message. This message was one of hope and comfort. Ezekiel was to preach to the people that the LORD had not abandoned them. He would restore them and revive them, he would bring them back to their homeland some day.

This morning’s sermon text is part of this message of hope and comfort that the LORD is bringing to the people through his prophet. Hear the words of the prophet Ezekiel one more time: ¹¹ “ **For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them.** ¹² **As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.** ¹³ **I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land.** ¹⁴ **I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.** ¹⁵ **I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD.** ¹⁶ **I will search for the lost and**

bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

The people had reason to give thanks because they had a God who would do things for them that no earthly king ever would.

We all have a picture in our mind of what a king or ruler does for his people. We may have the picture of the powerful dictator who rules with an iron fist or we may think of the good king who is loved by his people because he is so good. Whatever picture we might have, any king or ruler will have shortcomings. Eventually, whether the king is good or bad, they will do things that are in their own best interests, which are not in the best interests of their people. Even the best king can give an order to defend his kingdom, even if it will mean that many soldiers will be killed. Even a good king might give the order to close the city gates or walls in order to save their own life, while leaving the people outside to suffer. Even the best king might fight to keep his power instead of making peace.

But Ezekiel tells us we have a king that is greater than any earthly king. He does not use words like power, rule or authority. He says our king rules over us like a shepherd. This shepherd king does so many things for us that no earthly king will.

An earthly king will govern his people, but he cannot govern each person personally. He cannot listen to the needs of each person and give each person what they need. The king will use others to govern in his place. He will use governors, mayors and administrators to look out for his people.

Our king is different because he personally looks out for us each of us. He knows our individual needs. It is he and not another who searches for us to gather us into his flock with his many other sheep. Once we are there, he personally and daily gives us what we need to make it from one day to the next. He showers us with his many blessings like food and clothes, house and home, safety and security.

Another king might want to protect his people, but that protection has limits. Our shepherd King is different. Our king is he willing to battle the forces of evil at any time and in any place to rescue us from the danger that we are in. He is even willing to die to protect us.

When the war is going on the king does not go and spend time in the hospital. He does not go and tend the sick and put bandages on the wounded. It's not that this king doesn't care, he just has too many other things that he is doing.

Our king is not too busy to spend time with us when we are sick or ill, when we are going through troubles and trials, or when our own sin has brought us guilt and sorrow. Our king is right there with us when we are in the hospital bed recuperating from our illnesses, he is right there with us when the doctor says that it is time to think about surgery, he is right there with us when the consequences of our own sins are so overwhelming we don't know where to turn. Our king is with us to remind us that we do have hope. Hope that does not come from our own strength, but hope that comes from him and his strength.

Another king might provide some protection and blessing, but he will also demand his payment in the form of taxes, praise or adoration. As long as his people are doing these things, he will do good for them.

12 times in this short reading we hear the simple word "I". Even though this word is so simple, it is also very powerful. This is the LORD telling us everything that he will do for us and he does not demand that we do anything in return. Our shepherd is great because he does not demand anything in return for his goodness. He simply does for us what is good for us.

All of the things that our shepherd does for us as our king are reasons for thanks. We also have reason to thank our King because he has done things for us that we could not do for ourselves.

It was prophesied that the Messiah would come from David's line. David said that the Messiah would be his king, a king greater and more powerful than he. The name of the great king David was so closely tied to the Messiah who was to come that even the name David became a symbol of the Messiah. And so it here. The LORD say, ²³ **I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd.** ²⁴ **I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken."**

Jesus, is our Savior and our King because he has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. There are times that we might think that we can make it on our own, that we can provide for ourselves, or that we have done a good job of making ends meet. When these thoughts come we are no longer thankful to God for being our great shepherd and king, we are thankful for ourselves and our own cleverness.

Yet, the LORD says that even in these times, when our eyes are focused on ourselves that he will be with us, searching for us as we wander in our own sinfulness, calling to us to turn us back to himself so that we do not wander away into sin and death. Our king Jesus has done something for us that we could never do for ourselves. He forgives us for our sins.

Why was Jesus mocked for being a king in our Gospel for this morning? Why was he hung on a cross? Why did he die? He did these things because he is the greatest king of all. He walked onto the battlefield and offered himself for all of his people. He gave his life as a payment for our sins, to set us free to live a new life.

Jesus died to forgive us for all the sins of unthankfulness, of selfishness, for all the times that we think that we are the kings of our own world and not him.

Jesus died to save us from our sins and he rose to show us that eternity is ours. In our second lesson, the Apostle Paul shows us that Jesus rose from the dead to show the gates of the kingdom are wide open. Jesus welcomes us in.

Our king is an amazing king, he deserves thanks and praise today and every day. He deserves these thanks because he has given us so many blessings here on earth, but more than that he has given us the eternal gifts of forgiveness and eternal life. Our king, our shepherd is like no other. He gives us more than we deserve and more than we can ask. This king is worthy of our thanks and praise.