

Last Sunday after Pentecost: Christ the King, Sept. 26

The Collect and Psalms will be read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer. The Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel will be read from the Modern English Version Bible.

The Collect: Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Track 1 & 2 Old Testament: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

11 For thus says the Lord God: I, even I, will search for My sheep and seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so I will seek out My sheep and will deliver them out of all the places where they have been scattered in a cloudy and dark day. 13 I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel their grazing ground shall be. There they shall lie on good grazing ground, and in a rich pasture they shall feed upon the mountains of Israel. 15 I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord God. 16 I will seek that which was lost and bring back that which was driven away and bind up that which was broken and will strengthen that which was sick. But I will destroy the fat and the strong. I will feed them with judgment.

20 Therefore thus says the Lord God to them: I, even I, will judge between the fat sheep and between the lean sheep. 21 Because you have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns until you have scattered them abroad, 22 therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no more be a prey. And I will judge between one sheep and another. 23 I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even My servant David. He shall feed them himself and be their shepherd. 24 I the Lord will be their

God, and My servant David shall be prince among them. I the Lord have spoken.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Track 1 Psalm: Psalm 100

- 1 Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands; *
 serve the Lord with gladness
 and come before his presence with a song.
- 2 Know this: The Lord himself is God; *
 he himself has made us, and we are his;
 we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.
- 3 Enter his gates with thanksgiving;
 go into his courts with praise; *
 give thanks to him and call upon his Name.
- 4 For the Lord is good;
 his mercy is everlasting; *
 and his faithfulness endures from age to age.

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Track 2 Psalm: Psalm 95:1-7a

1 Come, let us sing to the Lord; *

let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.

2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving *

and raise a loud shout to him with psalms.

3 For the Lord is a great God, *

and a great King above all gods.

4 In his hand are the caverns of the earth, *

and the heights of the hills are his also.

5 The sea is his, for he made it, *

and his hands have molded the dry land.

6 Come, let us bow down, and bend the knee, *

and kneel before the Lord our Maker.

7 For he is our God,

and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.

Epistle: Ephesians 1:15-23

15 Therefore I also, after hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 do not cease giving thanks for you, mentioning you in my prayers, 17 so that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 that the eyes of your understanding may be

enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance among the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, 20 which He performed in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet and made Him the head over all things for the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all things in all ways.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46

31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 Before Him will be gathered all nations, and He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates his sheep from the goats. 33 He will set the sheep at His right hand, but the goats at the left.

34 "Then the King will say to those at His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in. 36 I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me.'

37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 And when did we see You sick or in prison and come to You?'

40 "The King will answer, 'Truly I say to you, as you have done it for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you have done it for Me.'

41 "Then He will say to those at the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave Me no food, I

was thirsty and you gave Me no drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, I was naked and you did not clothe Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

44 "Then they also will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not serve You?'

45 "He will answer, 'Truly I say to you, as you did it not for one of the least of these, you did it not for Me.'

46 "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing Prayer: On December 1, we celebrate the life of Nicholas Ferrar Deacon.

Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.

Nicholas Ferrar was the founder of a religious community at Little Gidding, Huntingdonshire, England, which existed from 1626 to 1646. His family had been prominent in the affairs of the Virginia Company, but when that company was dissolved, he took deacon's orders and retired to the country.

At Little Gidding, his immediate family and a few friends and servants gave themselves wholly to religious observance. They restored the derelict church near the manor house, became responsible for services there, taught many of the local children, and looked after the health and well-being of the people of the neighborhood. A regular round of prayer according to the Book of Common Prayer was observed, along with the daily recital of the whole of the Psalter. The members of the community became widely known for fasting, private prayer and meditation, and for writing stories and books illustrating themes of Christian faith and morality.

One of the most interesting of the activities of the Little Gidding community was the preparation of "harmonies" of the gospels, one of which was presented to King Charles I by

the Ferrar family.

The community did not long survive the death of Nicholas Ferrar. However, the memory of the religious life at Little Gidding was kept alive, principally through Izaak Walton's description in his *Life of George Herbert*: "He (Ferrar) and his family . . . did most of them keep Lent and all Ember-weeks strictly, both in fasting and using all those mortifications and prayers that the Church hath appointed . . . and he and they did the like constantly on Fridays, and on the vigils or eves appointed to be fasted before the Saints' days; and this frugality and abstinence turned to the relief of the poor . . . "

The community became an important symbol for many Anglicans when religious orders began to revive. Its life inspired T.S. Eliot, and he gave the title, "Little Gidding," to the last of his *Four Quartets*, one of the great religious poems of the twentieth century.

Let us pray: Lord God, make us worthy of your perfect love; that, with your deacon Nicholas Ferrar and his household, we may rule ourselves according to your Word, and serve you with our whole heart; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.