

## PREPARING AT HOME

November 20-26, 2017

*Focus reading:* Matthew 25:31–46 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?q=375955755>).

*Other lectionary readings:* Ezekiel 34:11–16, 20–24; Psalm 100; Ephesians 1:15–23

*Theme:* Christ Is Among Us

We come to the end of Jesus' teachings as recorded in Matthew. We have seen how Jesus uses stories to teach about the realm of God, a realm that we participate in today although we will not see it fully realized until the end of this present age. Jesus told these stories shortly before the time of his arrest and subsequent crucifixion. You can hear the urgency in his message. This last parable is about the final judgment. Familiar images of Christ are brought together as we encounter the shepherd, ruler, and judge. Who will be embraced as part of the realm of God and who will not? This is the question Jesus addresses in this parable. Who is "in" and who is "out" would be a real concern in everyday life for Matthew's immediate audience. The insiders were those with wealth and power, while the outsiders lacked even basic necessities. The divide between the two groups was wide and impenetrable. Yet, as he often does, Jesus tells a story in which expectations are turned upside down. God is not impressed by power and status. God is on the side of the poor and vulnerable and expects us to be on their side as well. God is in intimate relationship with God's people. Yes, works do matter, but this is not a story about doing good deeds in order to meet God's requirements. It is a story about being in relationship to God and recognizing God's presence in those who are vulnerable. It is by living in relationship that we truly become the people of God, living within and proclaiming God's realm.

### GOD'S REALM

Jesus told stories to help people understand what God's realm looked like. If God had God's way in the world, what do you think it would look like? Draw a picture of God's realm.

### THE LEAST OF THESE

Jesus wants us to feed the hungry, cloth the poor, care for the sick, and visit the lonely as though we are doing those things for Jesus himself – for so we are. How is our congregation doing that?

### YEAR'S END

Reign of Christ Sunday is the last Sunday of the church year. Advent begins next Sunday. If you would like to have an Advent wreath in your home or observe in some other way, make those preparations now. Making an Advent wreath can be a great family project!

### PRAYER

Gracious God,  
Forgive us when we see only our own needs  
and fail to see the needs around us.  
Help us to treat others as we would treat you.  
Amen.

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