

Sermon

Sheep without a Shepherd

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Today we gather on Christ the King Sunday—a day that crowns the Christian year with a bold confession: Jesus is Lord. Yet when we hear the word *King*, our minds race to images of thrones, crowns, armies, and decrees. Kings of history have ruled with power, prestige, and often fear. They have demanded allegiance, taxed their subjects, and built empires for their own glory.

But Christ the King is unlike any ruler the world has ever known. His throne is a rough-hewn cross. His crown is twisted thorns. His royal decree is mercy, His law is love, His victory is self-sacrifice. He does not command servants to bow low; He kneels to wash the feet of His friends. He does not demand tribute; He gives Himself as bread for the hungry and healing for the broken.

Mark tells us that when Jesus looked upon the crowds, He saw them as sheep without a shepherd—wandering, weary, vulnerable. And instead of exploiting them, He had compassion. This is the heart of His kingship: not domination, but devotion; not distance, but nearness. If Christ stood before us today, He would not tower above us in majesty to intimidate. He would lift our heads, meet our eyes, and say, *“I am here for you. My reign is love.”*

This begs the question: am I truly following this King in the way Jesus has asked me to? Do I recognize Him—in my life, in my heart, in my intuition, in the faces of others? Scripture tells us that the crowd recognized Him as He approached. But how? Did they see Him walking across the water? Did His image hang in the marketplace? Or was it something deeper—like that moment in Mark 1:16–20, when Simon, Andrew, James, and John left everything at once to follow Him? With no résumé, no reputation, no prior knowledge, they recognized something in Jesus that compelled them to surrender all. What was it they saw? What is it we see?

I remember my own recognition. As a teenager, I was not attending church, and had not for many years. Yet my spirit yearned for something more—for the loving Jesus who seemed woven into the fabric of our culture. I picked up the New Testament, and His words resonated with me. His ministry gave me hope, gave me strength. I was a sheep without a shepherd, wandering, searching—and I found the pathway to the light I had been longing for. Through the patient guidance of pastors and Christian educators, I was nurtured into a lifetime of ministry that continues to bring me joy today.

That is why I love the line in this passage: *“He began to teach them many things.”* Jesus is not a king who rules by command or compulsion. He is a King who elevates His followers—who awakens in them their own spirit of love and compassion. He directs them not by force, but by vision. His kingship is not about bending our will to His, but about opening our eyes to see where our lives can be most fulfilled, most purposeful.

This is a powerful passage with some of the most beautiful expressions of Jesus time on Earth. Feeding the five thousand, recognizing our vulnerability and meeting us there. Urging his disciples to rest, going to the Mountain to pray after all was done – walking on water through a storm. And let's recall how this passage ends:

“When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.”

Have you ever been so desperate that you are, perhaps metaphorically, crawling on your hands and knees and all you have the strength to do is touch the hem of his garment – reach to what is clearly hope, is exuding love and beauty and compassion? We all have moments where life overwhelms us but we have a shepherd who hears us, sees us, urges us to rest, loves us.

The image of Jesus as the Shepherd-King in Mark 6 is not new—it is rooted in the long story of God's people. Centuries before Christ walked among the crowds, the prophet Jeremiah spoke to a nation broken by corrupt leadership. He declared: *“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the*

sheep of my pasture!” (Jeremiah 23:1). Israel’s kings had failed to care for the flock; they had ruled with selfishness instead of compassion, power instead of love.

But Jeremiah did not stop with judgment—he spoke a word of hope. God Himself promised: *“I will raise up shepherds over them who will care for them... and I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”* (Jeremiah 23:4–5).

Do you see the connection? The promise of Jeremiah finds its fulfillment in Jesus. He is the righteous Branch, the true Shepherd-King, who gathers the scattered, heals the broken, and leads His people with justice and mercy. Where earthly rulers fail, Christ reigns in love. Where human shepherds scatter, Christ gathers. Where despair threatens, Christ brings hope.

Jeremiah’s words are not just ancient history; they echo into our own time. *“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!”* God’s grief over failed leaders is as real today as it was then. We know too well what it looks like when those entrusted with care—whether political leaders, corporate executives, or even spiritual shepherds—abuse their power, neglect the vulnerable, or scatter the flock instead of gathering it.

But Jeremiah does not leave us in despair. He points us to hope: *“I will raise up for David a righteous Branch... and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”* That promise

is fulfilled in Christ the King, the Shepherd who does not scatter but gathers, who does not exploit but heals, who does not abandon but restores.

In a world where so many voices compete for our loyalty, Christ's voice still calls us back to love, compassion, and hope. He is the Shepherd who sees us, who knows us, and who leads us into green pastures. His reign is not marked by corruption or fear, but by justice and mercy. And that is the hope we cling to: that no matter how many human shepherds fail, the true Shepherd-King will never fail us.

Mark shows us the Shepherd-King who feeds the hungry and teaches the searching. Jeremiah reminds us of God's promise to raise up a righteous Shepherd who will gather His scattered flock and reign with justice and mercy. Together, these passages declare one truth: Christ is that Shepherd-King.

And so the question comes to us: will we live as sheep who trust His voice? Will we allow His compassion to shape our lives, His justice to guide our choices, His mercy to flow through our actions? The world is full of false shepherds—voices that scatter, leaders who exploit, powers that divide. But Christ the King calls us to a different way: a way of love, of hope, of unity.

To follow Him is to recognize Him in the faces of the hungry, the lonely, the broken. To follow Him is to trust that His reign is not distant but near, not abstract but personal. To follow Him is to live as people of hope—sheep who know their Shepherd, and who walk in His light.

So on this Christ the King Sunday, let us lift our heads, hear His voice, and follow where He leads. For He is our Shepherd, our King, our hope. And in Him, we are never scattered—we are gathered, loved, and sent.