

# Our Sunday Readings

EZEKIEL 34:11-12,15-17  
 PSALM 23:1-3,5-6  
 I CORINTHIANS 15:20-26,28  
 MATTHEW 25:31-46

## Jesus in Disguise

### I CORINTHIANS 15:20-26,28

#### **Reading closely**

1. What does Paul insist has and will happen?
2. What fate do we share?
3. What does Christ still have to do?
4. What is the relationship between Christ and God?
5. Why might some people have denied the resurrection of Jesus?
6. How might the Corinthians have reacted to these words?

#### **Living the word**

7. What are all the ways people react to these words today?
8. What does this passage leave you thinking about?

### THE SECOND READING

#### **First fruits**

This passage is part of Paul's response to Christians who claim that there isn't a bodily resurrection. After explaining why they're wrong, Paul goes on to say that Jesus' resurrection is a promise to all believers that God will also raise them, body and soul, from the dead.

Paul compares Jesus to the portion of the harvest that farmers offered in thanks for what God had given them (v.20). These *first fruits* represent the whole harvest just as Christ's resurrection represents the resurrection of all who believe.

#### **From Adam to Christ**

Adam represents all humankind. All of us turn away from God and bear the repercussion of sin: death. Therefore, people need a savior, Jesus, who enters human existence in order to lead them out of death and into eternal life.

#### **Until the end**

Jesus triumphed over sin and death, but both still exist. The risen Jesus continues to fight evil in all its forms. All evil leads to death, thus death is the last force Christ will entirely defeat (vv.24-26).

Once Christ has purged all evil from the world, he will lead everyone and all creation in praise of God, his Father (v.28). Then at last God's world will be as God intended. Nothing will obscure or distract from God's glory or goodness.

**MATTHEW 25:31-46**

**Read 25:31-40.**

1. How do you picture the *Son of Man*?
2. Who is assembled? How do they behave?
3. Who all might the sheep represent?
4. What are the sheep given?
5. How do you imagine the sheep reacting?
6. What exactly do you think the sheep did to be rewarded in this way?
7. Why might the sheep have done these things?
8. With whom does the *Son of Man* identify?
9. What might the goats be thinking during this?

**Read 25:41-46.**

10. Who all could the goats represent?
11. What are the goats given?
12. What exactly do you think the goats did to warrant what happens to them?
13. Why might the goats have failed to act as they should have?

**Living the word**

14. How do you think God decides whom to save?
15. How readily do you see Christ in others?
16. Do you think people see Christ in you?
17. How does this parable challenge you?

**THE GOSPEL READING**

**He's here!**

Jesus has been telling stories about how to act until the Son of Man returns (24:45 – 25:30). People should remain faithful, prepare themselves, and use their time wisely. Now he speaks about what will happen when the Son of Man finally arrives.

**Sheep and goats**

In Jesus' day farmers who kept both sheep and goats had to separate them at night. The goats had to be kept indoors where it was warm. Sheep were more valuable than goats, so in this story they represent the righteous.

**The kingly Son of Man**

The title *Son of Man* alludes to Daniel 7:13-14 in which one like a *Son of Man* receives power from God over the whole earth. Everyone is subject to him and glorifies him alone. Since he rules all people, the *Son of Man* is also a king.

**Interpretation 1: Jesus in the poor**

If Jesus is describing a single judgment for everyone, then this last judgment is based on whether a person cared for those in need. Jesus stands in solidarity with the poor and suffering so completely that they become his face, his representatives, to others.

The problem with this interpretation is it focuses exclusively on Jesus' concern for those in need. It doesn't incorporate the other demands that Jesus makes of his followers (see Matthew 5 – 7).

**Interpretation 2: Jesus in Christian missionaries (and the poor?)**

Jews wondered how God would treat Gentiles who were good, upstanding people. Would God cast them out of his kingdom? Some Jewish texts presented two judgments, one for Jews and a second one for Gentiles. Paul echoes this belief in Romans 2:9-10.

Matthew 25: 31-46 might be a Christian response to the question of how God will judge non-believers. Non-Christians (*the nations*) who treated Christian missionaries with compassion are included in God's kingdom. Here it's the missionaries and not the poor who represent Jesus.

The problem with this interpretation is it fails to explain why the Gentiles didn't see Jesus in those who were obviously representing him.

**PRAYER**

*by Mother Teresa*

Lord, open our eyes,  
that we may see you in our brothers and sisters.  
Lord, open our ears,  
that we may hear the cries of the hungry,  
the cold, the frightened, the oppressed.  
Lord, open our hearts,  
that we may love each other as you love us.  
Renew in us your spirit.  
Lord, free us and make us one.  
Amen.