

The Shepherd King Twentieth Week in Ordinary Time Wednesday, August 22, 2018
8:15 AM **Ez 34:1-11;** Mt 20:1-16 The Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary (We need to strive to make human life as good as possible, as just as possible, but the ultimate issues lie way beneath the surface: in human hearts and minds and souls and human will.)

“For thus says the Lord God: ‘I myself will look after and tend my sheep.’”

This is from the prophet Ezekiel, and I think that **we need to read the prophet Ezekiel to understand the mission of Christ and the problems people had with the mission of Christ.**

Now the word “shepherd” in this text means “king.” The **shepherd king** was David; David was the model for all kings in Israel. Unlike the kings of the nations, the so-called gentiles, the goyim, the kings of Israel had a special charge: **they were to rule in the name of God with care and compassion for the people.** In other words **they were God’s representatives.**

Now in the gentile nations the kings may have thought of themselves as god’s representatives, but they weren’t representatives of the true God. **In the foreign nations the kings ruled basically for their own benefit,** as often happens even in our day with politicians, caring for their own well-being, feathering their own nest, seeking their own power, and so on. The prophet is saying God condemns this behavior in the shepherds of Israel.

And then he says, “I will shepherd my sheep myself.” I will do it. So when Christ comes, when Jesus comes, in so many ways fulfilling the messianic vocation, the people, in a sense, **naturally want to make him king because that is the role they understood the shepherd to be.** That is the role they understood Messiah to be, the king of Israel. But Jesus is really thinking in a different way, and this is why he told Pontius Pilate, **“My kingdom is not of this world.”** In other words it’s not a matter of politics or empire. My kingdom is a deeper kind of thing. It’s about the human heart, the human will, the choices people make, the suffering they endure, and how I have come to heal that, but not on a physical plane. It can’t be done. **The problems of**

human life cannot be resolved on the physical plane, through politics for example or through human law. **We need to strive to make human life as good as possible, as just as possible, but the ultimate issues lie way beneath the surface: in human hearts and minds and souls and human will.**

It is for this reason **Jesus came and made himself vulnerable** to all suffering, so that identifying with the sheep who are being shorn, becoming himself the Lamb of God, he is able to share with us divinity. So the **Incarnation is a double transference: he takes our humanity; he gives us his divinity.** And that's how all the Fathers of the Church understood the gospel. And that's how the great theologians like Thomas Aquinas understood the gospel. It is a powerful thing, but **it really requires for us to participate in it and to appreciate it; it does require our own life of prayer.** We do have to take time to let it sink in. We do have to take time to assimilate this great mystery of God sharing his divinity with us. Meanwhile it does not eliminate our problems, but it does **help us to deal with our problems.** It does not eliminate our suffering, but it does **help us deal with our suffering.** It does not eliminate our sickness, but it does **help us deal with our sickness.** But it is a kind of movement that is beneath the surface, and it requires time and it requires patience. And of course to get the whole thing going, it requires faith. Faith is not a ticket that we take to God at the moment of judgment. **Faith is a door we open now to the power and to the grace that God is offering to us.**