Where Is the King Sitting?

A devotional for Thanksgiving week · First Christian Church · Nov 23, 2026 · @Rebecca Sundquist

Sunday we heard Jesus say the King is found among the hungry, the stranger and the outcast. This week, as we gather around tables, take a few minutes each day to read, reflect and look for him.

Monday, November 23: The Shepherd Who Searches

Read: Ezekiel 34:11–16

In Ezekiel's day, the people of Israel were scattered. Their leaders had fed themselves and left the flock to wander. Into that mess, God makes a promise: *I myself will search for my sheep.* God doesn't send a substitute or wait for the lost to find their own way back. God goes looking.

Notice the verbs: seek, bring back, bind up, strengthen, feed. This is a Shepherd who knows that some sheep are lost, some are injured, and some are simply too tired to keep up. None of them get left behind.

Maybe you've wandered this year. Maybe you've been hurt, or you're just tired. Hear this today: you are being searched for.

Reflect: Where do you feel scattered or worn out right now? What would it feel like to be found?

Pray: Shepherd God, thank you for not giving up on me. Find me where I've wandered, bind up what hurts, and bring me home. Amen.

Practice: Think of someone who has drifted away from you, your family or the church. Send them a short note or text this week to let them know they're missed.

Tuesday, November 24: Put Down the Horns

Read: Ezekiel 34:20–22

These verses are uncomfortable. God turns from the scattered sheep to the strong ones and names what they've done: pushing with flank and shoulder, butting the weak with their horns until they were driven away.

This fall we called that *clobbering*. We saw how sacred words have been used as horns to push people out. Today's reading asks a harder question. Where have *I* pushed? Most of us don't mean to. We push when we're afraid there won't be enough room, enough attention, enough grace to go around.

The good news is that God says, *I will save my flock.* God's judgment isn't the end of the strong sheep. It's an invitation to stop pushing and start making room.

Reflect: When do you feel the urge to protect your place? Who might be on the other side of that?

Pray: God of the whole flock, forgive me for the times I've pushed instead of making room. Calm my fears of not having enough, and teach me to share the pasture. Amen.

Practice: Notice one moment today when you want to be first, be right or be heard. Choose to step back and let someone else have the space.

Wednesday, November 25: The Surprised Righteous

Read: Matthew 25:37–40

The most surprising thing in Jesus' story isn't the throne or the gathered nations. It's the question the righteous ask: *Lord, when did we see you?* They had no idea. They weren't trying to earn anything. They simply saw someone hungry and shared, saw a stranger and made room.

That means faithfulness often looks ordinary. It looks like the volunteer restocking the Blessing Box, the gardener at Seeds of Hope pulling weeds in July, or the neighbor who brings a casserole without being asked. The King was there all along, in plain clothes.

Today, many people are shopping, cooking and traveling. Some are standing in a food pantry line. The King is in all of those places.

Reflect: Who has fed you, welcomed you or visited you when you needed it? Did they know they were serving Christ?

Pray: Jesus, open my eyes to see you in the ordinary faces around me today. Make my kindness so natural that I forget to keep score. Amen.

Practice: If you're going to the store for Thanksgiving, pick up a few extra non-perishable items for the food pantry.

Thursday, November 26 (Thanksgiving Day): Enter with Thanksgiving

Read: Psalm 100

Psalm 100 is short enough to read aloud at the table. It calls the whole earth to praise. Not just one nation or one kind of person, but everyone. And it reminds us of something easy to forget: *it is God who made us, and we are God's.* We didn't earn our place in the pasture. It was given.

That's the heart of gratitude. When we remember that everything we have is a gift, we stop clutching it so tightly. There's room for one more chair, one more plate, one more story.

Today, look around your table, whether it's crowded, quiet or somewhere in between. Ask the question from Sunday: *Where is the King sitting?*

Table blessing (read together, or have one person read)

God of every good gift,
thank you for this food and for the hands that grew it, carried it and cooked it.
Thank you for the people at this table,
and for those we miss today.
Open our eyes to see you in one another,
and open our hearts to those who are hungry tonight.
Make us a people who always make room.
Amen.

Practice: Before the meal, invite each person to name one thing they're thankful for. Leave space for the quiet ones, and for whoever wants to name someone they're missing.

Friday, November 27: Enough

Read: Ephesians 1:15–19

Today the ads will tell us we don't have enough. Paul's letter tells a different story. He writes that he never stops giving thanks for the church, and he prays they'll come to know *the riches of God's glorious inheritance.* Not riches they have to buy or chase. Riches they already share.

Scarcity is loud on a day like today. It whispers that we have to hurry, grab and get ours before it runs out. But that same fear is what makes sheep push each other around. Gratitude quiets it. When we know we have enough, we can loosen our grip and look around for who needs a share.

You don't have to skip the sales to live this out. Just notice what's driving you, and remember what you already have.

Reflect: Where do you feel the pull of "not enough"? What do you already have that you've forgotten to be thankful for?

Pray: God of abundance, thank you for the riches I already have in you and in the people you've given me. Free me from the fear of not having enough, so I can be generous with what I hold. Amen.

Practice: Write a short thank-you note to someone in your church family, the way Paul did. Tell them one specific way they've been a gift to you.

Saturday, November 28: Keep Awake

Read: Mark 13:33–37

Tomorrow is the first Sunday of Advent, and a new church year begins. The first word Advent gives us is a simple one: *keep awake.* Jesus tells of a household waiting for its owner to come home. No one knows the hour, so everyone stays alert.

This week we've practiced a kind of wakefulness. We've looked for the King in the scattered and the hungry, at our own tables and in the people we usually pass by. Advent asks us to keep doing exactly that. The One we wait for is coming, and he has a way of showing up where we least expect him: in a manger, in a stranger, in someone who needs a seat at the table.

The church year ends with Christ the King and begins with a baby. It's the same Lord both times, reigning from the margins.

Reflect: What helped you stay awake to God this week? What would you like to carry into Advent?

Pray: Coming Christ, keep me awake. As the days grow darker, help me watch for your light, in the manger, in the margins and in the faces around me. Amen.

Practice: Set out a candle, wreath or nativity in your home today. Each time you see it this Advent, ask: *Where is the King today?*