Sermon Christ the King, 2026 Year A
Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24
Psalm 100
Ephesians 1:15-23
Matthew 25:31-46
November 22, 2026
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Bruton Parish Church Annual Meeting

This morning, we have reached a key way point on the journey of transition. Today is our Annual Parish Meeting. My sermon will share my reflections on our time together.

The prayer your search committee created to undergird this season has been especially insightful, particularly this line… "As we look to the future, grant us the grace and courage to imagine new directions and ways of being." That phrase is similar to my favorite line from the Apostle Paul's Epistles which we heard in today's lesson. "I pray that God… may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you." I relish this phrase because I believe it cogently expresses the Christian hope and belief. Faith opens our eyes. And then with our heart's vision clear we may come to know the hope that God has for us. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to live into the hope to which God calls us.

In my first sermon I asked the question "who is the Jesus that you follow?" For many Christians, the 25th chapter of Matthew's gospel defines the primary path of discipleship. The teaching in Matthew Chapter 25 is central to what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Many would say, "this is the Jesus I follow." Now, we must be careful, this is not Jesus describing the only elements of discipleship, but this is one clear articulation of Jesus' hopes for us. "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."

Listening to Matthew's description echoes the pronouncements of the Prophet Ezekiel. Our lessons from Ezekiel and Matthew speak of end times and of judgment. They call our attention to what matters in the eyes of God.

Looking at the judgment scene that Jesus describes, we should note that judgment is not an individual experience. But rather, judgment appears to be a group experience. The pronouns in the text are not singular, they are plural, you'll and we. Perhaps we will all be gathered together at the resurrection. And we will stand arm in arm. Together, where we can draw upon the strength of the work we have done.

Today's lessons remind us that God is drawing us out of our places of comfort. Out and about and into relationship with others. The

Christian tradition holds that we encounter Jesus as we encounter others. In this Centennial Year, we are celebrating with Colonial Williamsburg, the vision of Bruton's, The Rev. W.A.R. Goodwin to restore the 18th Century capital. Throughout this year, the phrase, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me," has stood out. Hospitality has been central to the work we have done together. I put together a list of some of the "new directions and ways of being" (hold up the legal pad) that grace and courage helped us put into practice this year. This is no short list. And we accomplished all of this with little anxiety and much joy.

You see the profound part of living the Christian faith is that in working together we actually come to see Jesus. When we extend our hands in love, we discover Jesus reaching out to touch us in return. Now, I do not know all the ways that we have been responding to Jesus this year; however, you will find many of them in the formal reports found in our Annual Meeting booklet. (A pdf of this booklet will be included in "This Week at Bruton")

Jesus said, "I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me something to drink." Jesus' first call is to provide food and drink, the most basic of human necessities. Read the Mission and Outreach Report and you will see the many ways Bruton is responding to Jesus' call. Disciples support those who are hungry and thirsty, and the report in your booklet shares the very creative ways we are responding.

Jesus said, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” We have the opportunity to welcome others every Sunday as we gather in worship. Our music ministry is in a class like few others, and our musicians and choristers dedication in offering their gifts inspires our worship and praise of God. I am deeply grateful for all the practice they put in. And that call to welcome undergirds the work of a plethora of groups all responding in specific ways: our ushers, altar guild, flower guild, Canterburians, our Children and Youth ministries, and so many others make our worship happen in extraordinary ways. And not just on Sundays but every day of the week, our guides are here welcoming all whom God brings our way. Our shop volunteers welcome visitors daily to the Gift Shop. All of these committed groups are reaching out in greeting, so that all may know that they are welcome, treasured, included, beloved.

And you no doubt have the opportunity to greet strangers each day as you go through life. Loneliness is one of the darker outcomes of the pandemic. To reverse these changes will take the concerted efforts of all of us. As friendships are formed, bridges of hope are built.

Jesus said, “I was sick and you visited me.” We do this in our pastoral care of those who are caregivers, or who are ill or shut in or bereaved. **We care for people.** This caring for one another is performed by all of us, lay and ordained. Through small group opportunities, pastoral visits from lay eucharistic visitors or visits from

our clergy. Some of this care is behind the scenes, but I am aware of the many ways you reach out to those who are sick or shut in. I see how you are supporting one another as you make Christ known.

Jesus said, "I was naked and you clothed me." Actions by our Mission and Outreach teams are active here as well as our Children and Youth program. We don't just feed the most vulnerable in the community, our focus is broad and especially in responding to the needs of the youngest in our community through special collections we all have the opportunity to participate in.

Jesus said, "I was in prison and you visited me."

The story of judgment at Jesus' second coming has always been a little threatening for me. I have always been caught short by the phrase, "in prison and you visited me." I did not see myself as one who would be visiting those in jail or prison. Yet, shortly after my ordination, I learned that even Episcopalians can end up in jail and I found myself visiting not infrequently. I would have never guessed that such opportunities would present themselves, but I was wrong.

These scenes of judgment are meant to capture our attention as they encourage us to reflect upon our lives and the causes that we support. Scripture suggests, we will not face the judgment alone. The pronouns are plural. Fortunately, we will face judgment together. Each of us can help another.

Have I seen all the love that Bruton and our members share and participate in? No, I suspect that I have seen only a small portion of your work in making Christ's love known. But your ministry has had an impact on me and I echo the thought of St. Paul, "I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers."

This season of transition in the life of Bruton has been filled with growth, excitement and discipleship. I have seen your discipleship firsthand in a vast array of missional engagements. I am incredibly grateful for the gifted staff and clergy team that I have had the good fortune to work with and who are here to support you in following Jesus. I have been incredibly blessed to have worked with you, the disciples of Jesus at Bruton Parish Church. Faithful followers of the King of kings and Lord of lords.