Date: November 22, 2026 (The Reign of Christ)

1. Texts: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24; Ps. 100; Ephesians 1:15-23; Matthew 25:31-46.
2. Subject: discipleship.
3. Topic: active care.
4. Aim: encourage.
5. Proposition: "By actively and genuinely caring for others, we demonstrate our love from and for God."

ACTIVE AND GENUINE CARE

Back in the Middle Ages and Renaissance periods, the Church thought of the reign of Christ in political and military terms. We call to mind the horrific crusades that clearly resembled the conquests of both Greece and Rome. Christ was the king who would conquer all other empires and set up his own political and military states. The Church took the words of one parable very literally.

> And the slave said, 'Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.' Then the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.'[1]

The Church compelled conversions at the point of a sword, all because Christ was supposed to be king over the empires of the Earth.

Today's Church has fundamental and serious problems with such an interpretation. In fact, this feast day is no longer called "Christ the King". We call it "The Reign of Christ." We've distanced ourselves from the political, militaristic and colonial implications of the language.

Now we have to figure out what the reign of Christ really means.

The lesson of the judgment of the nations gives us an excellent clue.

> …for I was hungry and you gave me food…thirsty and you gave me drink…a stranger and you welcomed me…naked and clothed me, sick and you cared…in prison and you visited me."[2]

The believers who are blessed are the ones who live out the love and compassion of Christ in genuine and practical ways. Such are the true citizens of the kingdom

[1] Luke 14:22-24.
[2] Matthew 25:31-46.

of God. They surrender themselves to the true reign of Christ by actively caring for others.

The application of this is clear, but not easy.

First, we must overcome our uneasiness with regard to the poor, the sick, the unhoused and the addicted. Most North Americans are a little afraid when it comes to the needy. We're anxious, perhaps, that too much may be demanded of us. We're uncertain about their responses and our own safety. From the time we're little, we've been taught to fear the stranger. This frequently inhibits our ability to care.

The best approach to this is to learn about your own community and your fellow citizens. Discover who needs what in your neighbourhood and town. Focus on seeing and understanding the people rather than on diagnosing their problems.

Then, you can begin to sort out what active and genuine care looks and feels like. You see, love must be tangible to be real.

In addition, love must be contextual. That is, we love others according to their needs, not our own. We care for them in word and deed based on their situation. I remember hearing once that a family in England during the time of World War II received a jar of peanut butter in their food hamper from Canada. They didn't know how to use it. Do you make a soup with it? Do you just scoop it out and eat it? Donating peanut butter was a loving thing to do, but it didn't suit the context of the recipient. Genuine care is practical care for someone in their situation.

Lastly, our genuine and active care must spring from Christ's gospel of love and compassion. We won't be able to maintain our care without such love. Our reservoir of love needs to be constantly and perhaps even continuously refilled. Even if we do not find an opportunity to proclaim the love of God, we still must be renewed in that love. It is only with the experience of the flow of love and grace that we can then pass such on to others through our acts of compassion.

Now, let's link all this up with today's holy day, the Reign of Christ.

We all call Jesus our Lord, King and Master. That's because Scripture labels him as such. We place ourselves under an obligation to do as he commands.

> This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you … I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.[3]

> You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.[4]

With these truths as our foundation, we have severed the link with a political and militaristic interpretation of Christ the King. The reign of Christ is that of our Lord and Master who proclaimed God's love in word and deed. We have committed ourselves to active, practical and loving compassion for those in need. This is what it means to follow Christ and to live under his rule.

Today, let's recommit ourselves to living out our citizenship in the kingdom of God. Let's recover our sense of the reign of Christ, which leads us to genuine and active love for the sake of others.

AMEN.

[3] John 15:12-14, 17.
[4] Matthew 22:37-40.