TEXT: Revelation 7:17  THEME: THE SHEPHERD AND THE LAMB

“For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd.”

Dear fellow subjects of Christ the King:

You know what dreams can be like—they can be funny or puzzling or downright terrifying. Sometimes they make sense but most often we can’t make any sense out of them at all! You don’t have to worry; I’m not going to describe any of my nightmares to you. But in our Old Testament lesson, the prophet Daniel describes his dream, a vision that God sent to him in the night. By inspiration, Daniel wrote down what he saw in his dream. It was a vision of what was to come. Daniel saw terrifying beasts arise from the sea, beasts that represented great kings and kingdoms. The last kingdom was more terrible than the others and its king was “terrifying and frightening and very powerful” (Dn 7:7). But in the midst of that terror, a throne of fire was set up before Daniel’s eyes. It was not the throne of a terrible king, but the throne of God himself, the Holy One who is called the Ancient of Days. Then in Daniel’s vision, there came on the clouds of heaven a human figure, a figure who is “like a son of man.” Daniel watched as this human being, this son of man, came to stand before the throne. The Ancient of Days gave the son of man a kingdom, a kingdom of “all peoples, nations and languages,” a kingdom that will never be destroyed, a kingdom that will last forever.

The Son of Man—it is the title from Daniel’s vision that Jesus often used to refer to himself. In his vision Daniel saw the Son of Man receive from God “dominion and glory and a kingdom,” a kingdom that would never be destroyed. Jesus said of himself, “You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Mk 14:62). But he said those words to the chief priest and the ruling council just before they condemned him to death. The Son of Man was sentenced to die. He was mocked and flogged and crucified, just as he said he would be. What happened to the glory of Daniel’s vision? Where was the dominion?

Before dominion came humility, because this is the Son of Man who came “not to be served but to serve” (Mk 10:45). The Son of Man is the Son of God who emptied himself and took the form of a servant. Before the Son of Man received dominion and glory, he stood before the heavenly throne and received from his Father another task, the task for which he was sent to earth. It was not a glorious task, not at first, but a mission of humility and suffering, because the Son of Man is the Good Shepherd who would die for his sheep. The Shepherd said, “I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father” (Jn 10:17-18). This is the authority the Son received from his Father, the Ancient of Days—the authority to lay
down his life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world and the authority to take up his life again. In humble obedience to his Father, the Son laid down his life on the cross. THE GOOD SHEPHERD IS THE LAMB led to the slaughter. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, who takes away your sin and mine.

Humble obedience—this is the attitude, the apostle Paul says, that we are to have—the attitude of Christ Jesus. “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (Php 2:5). It is the attitude of humility that leads you to think of others as more important than yourself. It is the attitude of Jesus, who in humility laid aside his glory and who received, not dominion, but a cross, who was crowned not with glory but with thorns. It is the attitude of the Son of Man who came not to be served but to serve. That is the attitude that we are to have, an attitude of self-sacrificing love and service. What would that attitude look like in your family, in your marriage, in our congregation? Instead of trying to grab all the glory for ourselves, what would our families or our church look like if we instead built up and encouraged others? What would it look like to submit to one another in love, out of reverence for Christ? That is the attitude of Christ our Savior, who humbled himself for the sake of our salvation. He did not take the glory for himself; he sought only to glorify his Father.

Jesus accomplished all that the Father sent him to do. The Son of Man received glory as a gift from the hand of the Ancient of Days. Having humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, the Good Shepherd, the innocent Lamb who received authority to lay down his life, received the authority to take up his life again. Having paid the penalty for our sins with his own precious blood, the humble, obedient Son of Man was raised from the dead. Exalted by his Father, his name has become the name that is above every name, the name of Jesus. It was Jesus that Daniel saw in his vision—Jesus, the crucified and risen Son of Man who was presented before the Ancient of Days to receive dominion and glory and a kingdom. The Son of Man received the name that is above every name. It is “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Php 2:10-11).

One day you and I, with all who trust in Jesus as their Savior, will stand in the countless multitude and join in their shout of praise: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (Rv 7:10). The Lamb who was slain is the Son of Man who received from the Ancient of Days an everlasting dominion, a kingdom that will not be destroyed. The Lamb enthroned above will be our Shepherd, and he will guide us to springs of living water and shelter us with his eternal presence. He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. For all eternity we will cry out in praise to God and to the Lamb: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever!” (Rv 5:13). Christ is our King! Amen.