When You Serve the Least, You Serve the King Quick Guide

Nov 24, 2026

About this quick guide: this is the short, print-friendly version of the guide for the Feast of Christ the King. Anyone is welcome to use it, including members of the Intercessor Church Community Groups. It keeps each question, the Summary, and the Deep Dive, and leaves out the commentary and catechism quotes to save paper.

The full guide is online: the full guide has the complete commentary and ICCEC Catechism quotes that each Summary and Deep Dive are drawn from. Download it free at angelstudyguides.com.

How to read this guide: each question is labeled by section and number, so A1 is the first question in section A, A2 is the second, and so on. The questions are written for this guide. Each one covers the ground of the outline question and takes it a step further. The linked passage after each question is the one the outline points to, or a verse inside that section's reading, so you can click it and read it in class. Anything after the word "also" is a wider range or an extra passage this guide adds. A Q-number in parentheses, like (Q-127), points to that question in the ICCEC Catechism. The **Summary** and **Deep Dive** are written for this guide from the sources listed at the end. Scripture quoted is from the New King James Version.

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This guide follows the Intercessor Church Community Group outline "Ready for the King, Week 4: Feast of Christ the King, When You Serve the Least, You Serve the King."

A. Christ Is the King Who Deserves Our Allegiance

A1. Within three days Jesus would hang on a cross, yet He speaks of coming "in His glory" with "all the holy angels," sitting on "the throne of His glory," and gathering "All the nations" before Him. What do these opening verses claim about who Jesus is, and why does it matter that He says this on the eve of His suffering? (Matthew 25:31-33; also Daniel 7:13-14)

Summary

These verses claim that Jesus is the King and Judge of every person who has ever lived. Either He was deluded about His own importance or He truly is the Lord of glory who will judge the nations from His throne (Guzik). No one reading this can reasonably think the speaker is a mere man (Benson). His first coming was under a cloud of obscurity, but His second will be in a bright cloud of glory (Benson). He came the first time in dishonor and reproach, but then He will sit on the throne of His glory (Chrysostom). The throne language means He will come as a king and judge to gather His subjects before Him (Barnes). The picture of the Son of Man coming in glory draws on Daniel 7:13-14 (Works). Saying this just before the cross shows the disciples who it really is that is about to suffer, and it steadies them for what is coming. Because He finished the Father's work, He has been given all authority on earth and in heaven (Q-124), and we will all stand before Him and answer for our thoughts and actions toward God and our neighbor (Q-127).

Deep Dive

Daniel saw "One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven," to whom "was given dominion and glory and a kingdom" (Daniel 7:13-14). Jesus takes that title for Himself: "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory" (Matthew 25:31). After the resurrection He says, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). Paul, in one of the outline's readings, writes, "For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25). Psalm 95, also one of the outline's readings, calls the Lord "the great King above all gods" (Psalm 95:3). This passage closes Jesus' long teaching on the end of the age in Matthew 24 and 25, and the outline reads it for the Feast of Christ the King.

Read before class: Matthew 25:31-33; Daniel 7:13-14; 1 Corinthians 15:21-28

A2. A Savior rescues us; a King rules us. What would it look like for Jesus to be King over your schedule, your money, your words, and your relationships, and why is it possible to welcome Him as Savior while quietly keeping parts of life back from His rule? (Matthew 25:31; also Luke 6:46; Philippians 2:9-11)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: letting Him set our priorities before the week fills up, giving and spending as people who answer to Him, speaking to others the way He would, forgiving when He says to forgive, and obeying when it costs something. To say "Jesus is Lord" is to commit ourselves to obey Him (GotQuestions). Acknowledging His lordship goes hand in hand with submitting to His authority; if He is Lord, He owns us and has the right to tell us what to do (GotQuestions). He is more than the Messiah and more than the Savior; He is the Lord of all (GotQuestions). In this passage He takes the title of King because He is carrying out the highest act of kingly power (Benson). He is the King of Zion and of the universe, now acting as Judge (Barnes). He is also the great Shepherd, who will soon distinguish those who are His from those who are not (Matthew Henry). He holds in the highest degree the power of a king (Q-83), and a disciple must love Christ more than self and all others (Q-323). We hold parts of life back because being rescued costs us nothing, while being ruled touches everything.

Deep Dive

Jesus asks, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). He warns, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). God has given Him "the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow" and "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Philippians 2:9-11). Psalm 95 joins worship and obedience: "Oh come, let us worship and bow down," and then, "Today, if you will hear His voice: 'Do not harden your hearts'" (Psalm 95:6-8). The outline's key insight for this section is that Jesus must be Lord over every part of our lives.

Read before class: Matthew 25:31-33; Luke 6:46-49; Philippians 2:5-11; Psalm 95:1-11

A3. The Shepherd-King "will separate them one from another," and in the end there are only two sides. What rivals compete with Jesus for first place in our hearts today, such as comfort, money, approval, politics, or a full calendar, and what are the warning signs that one of them has started making our decisions? (Matthew 25:32-33; also Matthew 6:24)

Summary

This is an application question. Common rivals: money and security, comfort, the approval of others, career, family put ahead of God, politics, entertainment, and a calendar too full to notice anyone. Warning signs include what we think about most, what we will not give up, what makes us anxious or angry when it is threatened, and what regularly wins when it conflicts with obeying Jesus. Our deepest affections can be fixed on only one object (Barnes); a servant with two masters ends up divided and fails one of them (Barnes). A person who loves the world may still pay God lip service while resisting His service in the heart (Ellicott). In the end there are not three groups but two, sheep and goats, right and left (Guzik). Every other distinction will pass away, and only the one between the holy and the unholy will remain (Matthew Henry). For now the two are mingled together, but then the division will be exact (Chrysostom). Putting any person, place, or thing before God is idolatry (Q-289); the first commandment calls us to honor, obey, and worship Him alone (Q-288).

Deep Dive

Jesus says, "No one can serve two masters," and "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Mammon is an old word for wealth. He gives the remedy in the same chapter: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). In the passage the King separates people "as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25:32). In the countryside sheep and goats grazed together by day and were often separated at night (D. A. Carson, quoted by Guzik). In Ezekiel, one of the outline's readings, God says, "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out" (Ezekiel 34:11), and He promises to judge between one sheep and another. The outline's reflection asks whether Jesus is truly reigning over the heart or other priorities have taken His place.

Read before class: Matthew 25:31-33; Matthew 6:19-24; Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

B. Christ Is the King Who Identifies with the Least

B1. The King names six needs: hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, and in prison. Which of the six stirs you most, and which do you find easiest to overlook? What might your answers show about where God is inviting you to grow? (Matthew 25:35-36; also Isaiah 58:6-7)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: many are moved by hunger or sickness because they have lived it or seen it up close, while prisoners and strangers are the easiest to overlook because they are out of sight or outside our circle. The needs we avoid often show where fear, inconvenience, or prejudice still has a hold on us. The first three acts were recognized duties, and the last three are freely chosen acts of self-forgetting love (Cambridge Bible). These six are part of the traditional list of seven corporal works of mercy (Ellicott). Kindness to the poor, the needy, and the sick shows that a person has Christ's spirit, because this is what He did on earth (Barnes). The requests are easy: not to free the prisoner or heal the sick, only to visit and to come (Chrysostom). In that day a prisoner often depended on loved ones for basic necessities (Works). These outward works of mercy assume faith and love behind them (Benson). We are called to a sacrificial life of physical and spiritual works of mercy (Q-270), which include visiting and ministering to the sick (Q-271).

Deep Dive

The King says, "I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me" (Matthew 25:35-36). Isaiah describes the fast God chooses: "Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him" (Isaiah 58:7). In Ezekiel God Himself does this work: "I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick" (Ezekiel 34:16). A seventh physical work of mercy is traditionally added to these six: burying those who have died in poverty (Q-271). James writes that pure religion is "to visit orphans and widows in their trouble" (James 1:27).

Read before class: Matthew 25:34-40; Isaiah 58:6-10; James 1:27

B2. The righteous are surprised: "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You?" Why does Jesus count what is done for "one of the least of these My brethren" as done to Himself, and what does their surprise tell us about the kind of love He is looking for? (Matthew 25:37-40; also Acts 9:4-5; Matthew 10:40-42)

Summary

Jesus has so joined Himself to people in need that He takes what is done to them as done to Him. He so fully identifies with the human family whose nature He took that He counts what is done to others as done to Himself (Pulpit Commentary). The Lord who took our flesh and blood is not ashamed to call the least His brethren (Ellicott). It is great kindness

in the Judge of the world to treat what we do for the poor as done for Him (Barnes). He can identify with the least because He has walked in their shoes (Works). The righteous served without any idea that they were serving Christ (Works), and their surprise shows that their love was not a performance for a reward. Judgment simply brings to light what has been true of a person all along (Carey). The good works in this passage are not the cause of salvation but its effect (GotQuestions). We experience the life of the world to come in finding Christ in the poor (Q-217), and by faith we see God in each other and in the face of the poor (Q-274).

Deep Dive

The King answers, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40). The risen Jesus spoke the same way to Saul, who was attacking Christians: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4). He told the Twelve, "He who receives you receives Me" (Matthew 10:40), and promised that even "a cup of cold water" given to "one of these little ones" would not lose its reward (Matthew 10:42). Proverbs says, "He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given" (Proverbs 19:17). The kingdom is something the righteous "inherit," and it was "prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). An inheritance is received, not earned (Matthew Henry). Paul says we are "created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Ephesians 2:10).

Read before class: Matthew 25:34-40; Acts 9:1-5; Matthew 10:40-42; Ephesians 2:8-10

B3. Jesus describes ordinary acts: food, a drink, a welcome, clothing, a visit. Thinking of your neighborhood, workplace, family, and church, who may be feeling overlooked, lonely, unwelcome, or forgotten, and what is one small, concrete thing you could do for that person this week? (Matthew 25:34-36; also Hebrews 13:1-3)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: a widow or widower eating alone, a new family at church, a coworker going through a divorce, a neighbor who is homebound, a teenager on the edge of the group, a relative no one calls, or someone in a hospital, nursing home, or jail. Small steps include a phone call, a meal, a ride, an invitation to sit together, a handwritten note, or a visit. Followers of Christ serve others as if they were serving Christ Himself (GotQuestions). The least of these are easily overlooked and ignored (GotQuestions). Believers are to care for one another and also for people who have no one else to care for them (Works). Receiving a stranger was a great virtue where

there were few public lodgings (Barnes), and the one who welcomes a stranger may be honored by a guest who turns out to be a blessing (Barnes). The Lord's brethren are first the Christian poor and suffering, and in the end any suffering person anywhere (Expositor's Greek Testament). The kingdom is made visible in the Church's service to the poor (Q-231), and mercy sees others as people made in God's image (Q-270).

Deep Dive

Hebrews says, "Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels" (Hebrews 13:1-2). Paul urges believers to be "distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13). When Jesus saw the crowds, "He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). Paul sets the order of care: "let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). The outline's three practices for the week are to see someone, to serve someone, and to seek Christ daily. Its closing thought adds that Jesus does not ask us to meet every need in the world, only to be faithful with the opportunities He places in front of us.

Read before class: Matthew 25:34-40; Hebrews 13:1-3; Romans 12:9-13

C. Christ Is the King Who Calls Us to Account

C1. Those on the left are not charged with theft, violence, or cruelty. Every charge is something they did not do: "you gave Me no food." Why does Jesus treat doing nothing for a person in need so seriously, and how is leaving someone unhelped different from, and yet related to, actively harming them? (Matthew 25:41-43; also James 4:17; James 2:15-17)

Summary

Jesus treats neglect as real sin, because love that does nothing is not love. The offenses punished here are omission and negligence (Pulpit Commentary). The stated ground of condemnation is neglected duty: they did it not (Barnes), and people are answerable for neglect as well as for outright sin (Barnes). The charge is not an obvious moral violation but indifference toward Jesus and His people, and that indifference sealed their doom (Guzik). Doing nothing is shown as the road to condemnation (R. T. France, quoted by Guzik). There is no such thing as merely negative goodness (Benson). A hungry person does not need kind words alone but the acts that kind words should lead to (Barnes). Harming someone and leaving someone unhelped are different acts, but both treat the

person as if he does not matter, and Jesus takes both personally. Sin, whether by commission or omission, is an insult to God and to the image of God in our neighbor (Q-241), and faith without works is dead (Q-10).

Deep Dive

The King says to those on His left, "I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink" (Matthew 25:42). James writes, "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). He gives an example: if someone says to a person without food or clothing, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but gives nothing, "what does it profit?" (James 2:16). "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17). The fire is described as "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41), while the kingdom was prepared for people (Matthew 25:34). All three scenes in Matthew 25 turn on something left undone: lamps not supplied with oil, a talent not put to use, and people in need not helped. If sins of omission are punished this way, open wrongdoing will not be treated more lightly (Pulpit Commentary).

Read before class: Matthew 25:41-46; James 2:14-17; James 4:17

C2. They ask, "Lord, when did we see You?" They had seen the need but not the King in it. What makes it easy to notice someone's need and still walk past, such as hurry, fear, awkwardness, or assuming someone else will help, and what would help you stop the next time? (Matthew 25:44-45; also Luke 10:30-37)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: we are in a hurry, we do not know what to say, we fear being taken advantage of or getting pulled into something bigger, we assume a family member, the church, or an agency will handle it, or we have seen so much need that we have stopped feeling it. Those on the left simply did not care that the Lord's brothers were hungry, sick, or in prison (GotQuestions). The moment on the road looked like chance, yet in God's purpose it was the test of each man's character (Ellicott); the priest saw the wounded man and would not come near (Barnes). Those who do not see the needs of the disadvantaged act as if they have never seen Jesus (Works). We cannot afford to be indifferent to the needy people all around us (Guzik). Greed blinded them (Chrysostom), and they lived for self alone (Pulpit Commentary). What helps: praying each morning to notice people, leaving margin in the day, deciding ahead of time to stop, and going with a friend. Mercy means loving others as Christ has loved us (Q-270), in a life of faith that shows itself in good works (Q-7).

Deep Dive

Those on the left ask, "Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?" (Matthew 25:44). He answers, "inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me" (Matthew 25:45). In the parable of the Good Samaritan a priest "saw him" and "passed by on the other side," and a Levite "came and looked, and passed by on the other side" (Luke 10:31-32). The Samaritan also "saw him," but "he had compassion. So he went to him" (Luke 10:33-34). Jesus ends with "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37). In Ezekiel God rebukes the strong sheep who push the weak aside, and He promises to "feed them in judgment" (Ezekiel 34:16). The outline warns that we can be busy with church activities and still miss the people God puts in front of us.

Read before class: Matthew 25:41-46; Luke 10:25-37; Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

C3. The scene ends with two destinations, "everlasting punishment" and "eternal life." If living faith shows itself in practical love, what would it look like for this Community Group to be a place where people are truly seen, welcomed, loved, and cared for, and what first step could the group take together? (Matthew 25:46; also 1 John 3:16-18; Galatians 6:9-10)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: learning names and stories, noticing who is missing and calling them, making room for newcomers, bringing meals when someone is sick or grieving, praying for specific needs and following up, and serving together outside the group. First steps could include choosing one person or family to help this month, visiting a homebound member together, or each naming one act of service and reporting back next week. If Christ laid down His life for us, we should be willing to make the much smaller sacrifices that relieve others in their distress (Barnes). In God's kingdom no one is hungry, naked, sick, or alone (Works), and His rule welcomes people who have no status (Works). Those who have seen Jesus no longer have any excuse to avoid the least of these (Stanley Hauerwas, quoted by Works). The core message is that God's people will love others (GotQuestions). Life and death are set before us so that we may choose our way (Matthew Henry), and God is not the author of the curse (Ellicott). Disciples must be known for sacrificial love (Q-323), and all who are found in Christ will enjoy His presence forever (Q-128).

Deep Dive

The passage ends, "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:46). The same Greek word stands behind "everlasting" and "eternal," so the punishment lasts as long as the life (Adam Clarke, quoted by Guzik). John writes, "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us," and asks how the love of God can abide in someone who "sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him" (1 John 3:16-17). "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). Paul encourages, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Galatians 6:9). Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). The outline's group commitment asks each person to name one specific act of service for the coming week.

Read before class: Matthew 25:41-46; 1 John 3:16-18; Galatians 6:9-10

Bringing It All Together

This closing page gathers the whole study into a few lines you can carry out of the room. Read it aloud at the end of class, or come back to it during the week.

The big picture

On the last Sunday of the church year, Jesus shows how the story ends: the Son of Man on His throne, every nation gathered before Him, and a shepherd separating sheep from goats (Matthew 25:31-33). What surprises both groups is where the King has been all along. He was with the hungry, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner, and He takes what was done for them, or left undone, as done or left undone to Himself (Matthew 25:40, 45).

Key takeaways

1. **Jesus is King, not only Savior.** The One who was about to be crucified is the Judge of all nations, and He claims every part of life: our time, our money, our words, and our relationships (A1, A2).
2. **There is no neutral ground.** In the end there are only two sides. Anything that takes first place over Him, even a good thing, has become a rival king (A3).
3. **The King is met in the least.** He counts kindness to the hungry, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner as kindness to Himself: "you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40) (B1, B2).
4. **The love He looks for is ordinary and unselfconscious.** A meal, a drink, a welcome, clothing, a visit. The righteous were not keeping score and were surprised to learn He had noticed (B2, B3).

5. **Doing nothing is not innocent.** Those on the left are not charged with cruelty. They saw the need and walked past, and the King says, "you did not do it to Me" (Matthew 25:45) (C1, C2).
6. **Mercy does not buy the kingdom. It shows whose we are.** The kingdom is an inheritance, "prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34), and living faith shows itself "in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18) (C3).

One sentence to remember

When you serve the least, you serve the King.

A verse to keep

"And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'" (Matthew 25:40)

This week

Choose one person, one need, and one concrete act, and do it before the group meets again. At the end of each day, ask: Lord, where did I see You today, and where did I walk past You?

Sources

The Summary and Deep Dive draw on these sources. The full guide at angelstudyguides.com quotes them word for word under each question.

Source	Where to find it
ICCEC Catechism (2014), cited by Q-number	iccec.org PDF
John Chrysostom, Homily 79 on Matthew	New Advent
Carla Works (2023) and Greg Carey (2014), Working Preacher on Matthew 25:31-46 (Works quotes Stanley Hauerwas)	Works, Carey
David Guzik, Enduring Word on Matthew 25 (this page quotes D. A. Carson, R. T. France, and Adam Clarke)	Matthew 25
GotQuestions.org: the Parable of the Sheep and Goats; the least of these; Jesus is Lord	Sheep and Goats, Least of these, Jesus is Lord

Source	Where to find it
Matthew Henry, Ellicott, Barnes, Benson, the Pulpit Commentary, the Cambridge Bible, and the Expositor's Greek Testament on Matthew 25	25:31, 25:34, 25:35, 25:40, 25:41, 25:42, 25:45
Ellicott and Barnes on other verses	Matthew 6:24, Luke 10:31, Hebrews 13:2, James 2:15, 1 John 3:17
New King James Version (NKJV)	Bible Gateway