

## Devotional Paraphrasing of the Scriptures Appointed for Christ the King Sunday

### Psalm 95 (ESV)

Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;  
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!  
<sup>2</sup>Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;  
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!  
<sup>3</sup>For the LORD is a great God,  
and a great King above all gods.  
<sup>4</sup>In his hand are the depths of the earth;  
the heights of the mountains are his also.  
<sup>5</sup>The sea is his, for he made it,  
and his hands formed the dry land.  
<sup>6</sup>Oh come, let us worship and bow down;  
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

<sup>7</sup>For he is our God,  
and we are the people of his pasture,  
and the sheep of his hand.  
Today, if you hear his voice,  
<sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,  
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,

<sup>9</sup>when your fathers put me to the test  
and put me to the proof, though they had seen  
my work.

### Deacon John's Devotional Paraphrase

Join me as we all worship God together;  
raising a joyful song to the foundation of our salvation!  
Let's enter God's presence with thanksgiving;  
singing a joyful song to praise Him!  
For God is a great God,  
and a great King above any other god.  
He holds in his hand the deepest parts of the earth,  
and the tallest mountains belong to him as well.  
All the oceans are his, for he made them,  
and his hands formed the land on which we walk.  
Come with me! Let's be extravagant in the way we  
worship such a King;  
let us kneel before God our Creator!

For *he* is our God;  
we make our living on his land,  
and he gives us what we need from his own hand.  
Today, if you sense he is guiding you,  
don't put up walls around your heart or your mind,  
like people have done for millennia,  
even those who have known what it is to live in a  
desert,  
being wholly reliant on God for every physical need.  
At some point, every ancestor of yours has put God to  
the test,

<sup>10</sup> For forty years I loathed that generation  
and said, “They are a people who go astray in their  
heart,  
and they have not known my ways.”  
<sup>11</sup> Therefore I swore in my wrath,  
“They shall not enter my rest.”

even though they’d seen his work before.  
Remember what God’s chosen people did to wander in  
the wilderness for forty years.  
God loathed that generation.  
He said, “Their hearts so easily go astray;  
they don’t know my ways.”  
And remember how God our King swore in his anger,  
“I won’t let them enter my rest.”

### Ezekiel 34:11-20 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> “For thus says the Lord GOD:

Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. <sup>12</sup> As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. <sup>13</sup> And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land.

And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. <sup>14</sup> I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel.

<sup>15</sup> I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. <sup>16</sup> I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak,

### Deacon John’s Devotional Paraphrase

Long ago, through a prophet-priest named Ezekiel, the Court of our God handed down the following opinion:

*“Watch, listen, and learn: I, yes I myself will look for my followers and will search for them throughout all places. In the same way shepherds look for lost and scattered sheep, so will I look for my people. On a cloudy day as dark as night, I will rescue my people from all the dark places where they have been scattered. I will pick them out from the nations, where good ones and bad ones live side by side, and I will bring my people into a new nation that’s just for them. I will give them all they need to survive, whether they choose to live on a mountainside, in a valley, or in a town or city. I will make the weather eternally seasonable so that the land always produces a good crop. The people will be able to rest there. I myself will lead my people, and I will make them rest. I will seek the ones who have been lost, whether they’ve been ignorant about being lost or knew it and felt the fear and anxiety that comes from being*

and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

<sup>17</sup> “As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord GOD:

Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and male goats.

<sup>18</sup> Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture;

*lost. I will bring back to this country those who have strayed from my ways, and I will heal those who were injured while living in all the former territories ruled by men and women, side by side with other wounding sinners. I will make weak people strong, and the unjust strong ones I will destroy when I feed them into the hungry jaws of justice.*

Again, Ezekiel warned those who followed him as their priest and prophet with these words of God:

*Pay attention to this observation I have made about the way some of you are living, and consider my power and authority over your world! Remember: I am the one who judges person against person; good character against bad character; morality against immorality. Considering this, one might think some of you would change your ways. So many of you have so much more than others, yet when you've had your fill of good food and enjoyed your possessions, you live in a way that makes the situations of those who have so much less than you even worse. So many of*

and to drink of clear water, that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet?

<sup>19</sup> And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have muddied with your feet?

<sup>20</sup> “Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them:

Behold, I, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep.

*you take it for granted that you have clean water to drink, and when you’ve quenched your thirst, knowingly or unknowingly, you pollute the waters of others.*

*Remember how much I love the people I favor and the extent to which I am going through the earth to find them, to heal them, and give them a great inheritance. Considering that, don’t you find it a dangerous way of crossing me to spoil what little food my favored ones have had to eat? Don’t you think I’ll remember the way you polluted the waters of my children who are less well-off than those of you doing these things?*

Therefore, Ezekiel finished giving God’s warning to anyone still listening with these jarring words from the God who has created everything and has the ultimate power and authority over the earth: “Yes, I... I myself will have the final word regarding who is just and who is not.

**I Cor. 15:12-28 / I Thes. 4:14-17**

12 Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.

16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

**Deacon John's Devotional Paraphrase**

Our faith teaches that Christ was raised from the dead, so how is it that some who call themselves Christians can claim that we won't be raised from the dead one day after we've passed on? If resurrection of the dead isn't possible, then not even Christ was raised. And if Christ wasn't raised, every sermon we preach is a waste of time and our faith is meaningless. Actually, if those who deny the resurrection were right, it'd be even worse than we were wasting our time, because we'd be saying things about God that weren't true.

Again, dead people can't come back to life, then not even Christ is alive. And if Christ is not alive, your faith is worth nothing and you are still trapped in every sin that detracts from the full quality of life God intended for you to live in his freedom. Moreover, if that's true, everyone who has passed away trusting in God's promise of a resurrection are gone forever, never to live again—never to be remembered by anyone one day. And if that's true—if Christ only gives us hope in this life—then people should pity us for the way we choose to live, because it would be most illogical to order your life around Christian

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

*[1 Thessalonians 4]*

14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we

principles if there was nothing left for you after you took your last breath.

But thanks to be to God; that miserable state of affairs is not the way God designed reality. Christ really was raised from the dead. It's not a metaphor; it's an objective, physical reality. He walked again, breathed again, spoke with his friends again—he is very much alive. And his return to life was just the first of many who will live and breathe again, including ones who died before him, ones who have died up to today, and those who will die at some point in the future, including us.

The first human male made a single choice that made death a reality. Conversely, it was a single man named Joshua who reversed it, bringing life after death by a single choice he made. All of us will die because of Adam, but all of us will be made alive again because of Christ. This will happen in a specific order. Christ was first, and he will return with those who have died before us. Finally, those who have ordered their lives under

declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

*[1 Corinthians 15]*

24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.”

But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him.

his rule at the time he returns to earth—they shall be given their new life, too.

Then will come the end, when Joshua delivers his kingdom to God the Father after destroying every other political power, financial power, and unyielding social influence.

Joshua will reign until he has overthrown all his enemies, and the last enemy to be destroyed will be death itself. Remember: our ancient scriptures teach that “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” clearly, “all things” does not include Joshua’s Father, since logically, He is the one who gave this role to Joshua in the first place.



28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him,

that God may be all in all.

And when all things are in fact subject to Joshua's rule, he will do what is unthinkable; after accruing such unimaginable power, he will be the first ruler in human history to willingly hand it over to another, so that even Joshua will be subject to the One who Created reality as we know it.

He will do this so that all may be one with God, and that He shall be one with us—God all in all.

**Matthew 7:21-23 and 25:31-46**

31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory,

and all the angels with him,

then he will sit on his glorious throne.

32 Before him will be gathered all the nations,  
and he will separate people one from another as a  
shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33

**Deacon John’s Devotional Paraphrase**

When the man named Joshua returns to us, he will abolish this system of government we’re all so proud of—no more democracy!—and he’ll consolidate all political control to himself. He’ll combine the power of the presidency, the legislature, and the judiciary into a single political office. It won’t be only the most powerful nation the world has ever seen; it’ll be the single most powerful nation the universe has ever known—with one singular man at the top of the pyramid.

When he comes and sets up this new form of government, he will have with him all of his public servants who have been popping in and out at various times to warn the locals about this future. Whether they have chosen to listen to those messengers or not, well . . . that’s a matter that’s been left to the people’s own consciences and free will. All the same, they, too have been observing the goings-on within every nation throughout all time, and they’ve been steadily reporting back to the Emperor-elect. Perhaps that is why those bureaucratic-messengers will be standing around as Joshua, on his first day in office, makes a final judgment from his throne concerning who truly has been good—a directed verdict pertaining not only to Americans, but to all peoples everywhere.

He’ll begin by segregating everyone into two categories:  
1) those for whom he has granted asylum and citizenship

And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

34 Then the King will say to those on his right,

‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom

prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink,

I was a stranger and you welcomed me,

in his new nation, and 2) those he shall deport back to their ancestral homelands, along with the ultimate politician, soon to stand trial for his many crimes against the human race.

To the first group (those staying), he’ll say:

*This is about to be the kind of country you’ve wanted for a long time but could never create on your own. And I’m making it just for you. I planned this before you were born . . . even before your parents and grandparents realized how bad a direction things were going.*

*I know you’ve had no real power to this point, but I’m about to give every one of you a special role in my new political system. You’ll be the elite in this new society.*

*Why?*

*Because, until now, there’ve been so many hungry people, and people without access to clean water; you made sure they had food to eat and clean water to drink. And there were immigrants in your country who didn’t look, sound, or act like what many of your fellow Americans thought an American should look, sound, or act like. Far from blaming them for*

36 I was naked and you clothed me,

I was sick and you visited me,

I was in prison and you came to me.’

37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying,  
‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you,  
or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did  
we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked

*all your problems, you were the ones who were willing to welcome them and give them a hand. Whenever there were people who couldn’t afford clothes or the niceties of your society, you made sure they were given whatever they needed. When there were sick people, you visited and cared for them.*

*Moreover, yet perhaps worst of all, while the rest of your country threw more and more people into your prisons each year because your leaders wanted to “look tough on crime,”—or, in the case of others, they just didn’t think highly enough of the idea that everyone, even prisoners, were created in God’s image, and therefore couldn’t be bothered to think of ways to actually help those prisoners become better versions of themselves—you went ahead and visited those prisoners; you alleviated their loneliness and made sure they had positive influences from the outside world.*

He’ll tell the people he was actually there among all those groups the whole time, even though they didn’t see him. And all those do-gooders who kept the main thing—the ones who didn’t just try to get rich or listen to their own ideas about what it meant to be successful—yes, all the helpers will answer this new leader saying, “Well... we did help many of the groups you just mentioned, but there’s no way you were there,

and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

40 And the King will answer them,

‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

41 “Then he will say to those on his left,

‘Depart from me, you cursed,  
into the eternal fire prepared

for the devil and his angels.

sir . . . we’d have seen you! A leader like you doesn’t exactly blend in, you know...”

But Joshua will say:

*I can assure you it’s true; as crazy as it seems . . . it’s true—I identify so strongly with those people at the bottom that, on a metaphysical level you couldn’t possibly begin to understand, “they were me and I was them” the entire time . . . and whatever you did for the worst-off of those people?—I’m crediting it to you now just as I would were I to have actually been there in physical form... actually been there in those prisons, or asking for spare change at a busy intersection, or trying to cross into your country . . . .*

But then he’ll say to the second group, the ones about to be deported:

*Get out of my sight, damned ones; as far from my new capital city as possible. You’re going to taste the same fiery, eternal punishment prepared for my political opponent, as well as each and every one of his dark-hearted political operatives, who have done everything they can to stack the cards against my*

42 For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’

44 Then they also will answer, saying,

‘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?’

45 Then he will answer them, saying,

*people, and who have genuinely enjoyed it for centuries.*

*Why must you go with him? Because when I was hungry, you gave me nothing. When I was thirsty, you gave me nothing. When I was an unwelcome alien, you joined the ranks of those who chose not to accept me—who blamed me for the problems your countries brought upon themselves. When I couldn’t “pull myself up by the bootstraps,” as some of you have advocated, you didn’t lift a finger. And when I was put in prison, you didn’t visit me even once.*

This second group—the ones being rounded up and marched out of the kingdom—will try to justify their history of looking the other way, arguing with Joshua until the bitter end. Ironically, they will betray their own disdain for all those they see as *beneath their station* in life, continuing to miss Joshua’s point entirely. That is, rather than apologizing for the way they treated the less fortunate, or even asking for a more merciful sentence from this new president-judge, they’ll make a final, lame attempt to justify themselves. They will miss the metaphor entirely as they retort, “But sir, you weren’t among those people.”

He’ll continue . . .

*You heard the same stories about my life year after year. How has it gone over your head that I . . .*

- was born into poverty;*
- spent my first years as a refugee;*
- grew up under the hegemony of an outside political power;*
- was looked down upon even by those in my own society because of where I grew up*

*And, this is the big one . . .*

*Busy with all the trappings of Easter (or your spring break plans), you failed to appreciate the ironic climax of my life's story. You missed that I was . . .*

- wrongly convicted for reasons of personal and political convenience;*
- placed on death row;*
- tortured after being denied my most basic human rights; and*
- executed in an entirely legal fashion by the state for treason.*

*Yet you still don't understand why I identify so deeply with those who were allowed to fall through*

‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’

[Matthew 7]

<sup>21</sup> ‘Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’

*the cracks, either by your negligence or your outright disdain?*

*The ones I’m now bringing with as I come into power?—I consider that however you treated them is the way you have treated me. And considering that I’ve just demonstrated the ultimate show of absolute power over the universe, and that even then, you’ve made excuses and failed to acknowledge your own evil character, well . . . only a fool would think there’s still hope you might suddenly begin to give deference to me and this new nation of mine.*

*The most cursory glance of the facts proves that if you were permitted to remain here, you’d continue to violate my simple statutes of love, of peace, and of grace. It is too clear for argument that I cannot tolerate the risk of such sedition under my administration.*

Growing more frantic by the second, knowing this is a court of final appeal, yet they still will not repent. Continuing to see themselves as the center of the universe, they will argue instead: “Joshua! JOSHUA! Did you not see us speak truth to power and support all the right political causes? Did you not see we drove out demons? We even performed miracles in your name!”



<sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

*[Matthew 25]*

46 And these will go away into eternal punishment,

but the righteous into eternal life.”

*I've never known you. Be gone, you evil ones. You've never submitted to the laws of my state.*

With those words, they will be banished. There will be no need of a jury, because Joshua shall convict them of *negligence per se*. He shall see to it that the executioner destroys them along with every devil and demon.

But the ones who have had nothing, along with those who were people of means who chose to give to those with nothing—suddenly, they will have everything and more. And it shall be their property and their purview forever.