

**Second Sunday of End Times Last Judgment – November 12, 2017**  
**Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church**

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**Matthew 25:31-46**

**"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32) All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33) He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 34) "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35) For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36) I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' 37) "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38) When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39) When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' 40) "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' 41) "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42) For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43) I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' 44) "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' 45) "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' 46) **"Then they [those on his left] will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."****

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Whenever we confess our faith together with either the Apostles' or the Nicene Creeds we have the opportunity to review for ourselves what Jesus has done for us as our Savior. These Creeds remind us of the major truths of the Christian faith and provide us with a simple way to tell others what we believe. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, for our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He died and was buried. On the third day he rose again in keeping with what the Scriptures had foretold. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

It's important to keep these basic truths in mind because there are many false teachers who teach confusing things about our Lord's return. There is the false teaching of the rapture – the belief that when Jesus returns again he will take the believers to heaven and the unbelievers will be left behind – to have another chance to come to faith. There is the false teaching that when Jesus comes again he will come to establish his kingdom for a 1000 years in this world. These teachings are really lies of Satan – they remove the urgency for proclaiming the Gospel and believing the Gospel because they hold out the option of a second chance for salvation.

Another lie of Satan is the lie that everyone will be saved. This lie comes in a variety of forms – but one that seems to be very popular today is the lie that all religions believe in the same God but see him differently. In other words, it doesn't really matter what you believe or who you believe in – everyone the Jew, the Muslim, the Christian – they'll all end up in heaven together. But that lie stands in direct conflict with what the Scriptures teach -- (John 14:6) **Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."**

And of course there's also the common belief today that there are many books of truth that can provide a basis for your faith – the Book of Mormon, the Koran, and the Bible are commonly regarded as equal in spite of the fact that they contradict each other. As Christians, we believe that the Scriptures ALONE are able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (cf. 2 Timothy 3:15) Therefore we do not need to look for additional revelations from God. In fact, we realize that if anyone adds or takes away from the teachings of Scripture that they will be excluded from eternal life and will bring wrath upon themselves.

Our text for today uses clear pictures, words and promises which even a child can understand to set the record straight about what will happen on the day that Jesus returns and about who will inherit eternal life. It reminds us that

**Theme:** He Shall Come to Judge the Living and the Dead

- 1st                    Look at the picture Jesus uses to describe that day
- 2ndly                Listen to what Jesus will say on that day
- 3rdly                Wait eagerly for Jesus to fulfill his promise of eternal life

**"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32) All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33) He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.**

What do you see in that picture? 1<sup>st</sup> we see Jesus – the Son of Man. He's coming in glory – he shines brighter than the sun – all of the angels are with him 100's and thousands of them – shining brightly. Then Jesus is seated on a heavenly throne. The OT lesson for the day described the scene in this way: (Daniel 7:9-10) **"As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. 10) A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.**

And then all the nations will be gathered before him. Again the prophet Daniel describes the scene: (Daniel 12:2) **Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.** Everyone who has ever lived will awake from the sleep of temporal death to stand before Jesus. Can you imagine the sight in the cemeteries throughout the world? Everyone is going to be present – no excuses, no exceptions. It staggers the imagination. We marvel at the power of God which will be able to bring about such a mass resurrection. We can't figure out how a world full of people can see him. The scene might seem chaotic to us but that's not how Jesus describes it. He's in complete control.

As the nations are gathered before Jesus, he separates them into two groups. The picture Jesus uses is the picture of a shepherd separating the goats from the sheep. Anyone can see the difference between a sheep and a goat. That's a simple task. So on the last day it will be simple for Jesus to separate the believers from the unbelievers. The sheep will be placed on Jesus' right – a place of honor reserved for those who by God's grace believed in Jesus. The goats are placed on Jesus' left – a position of dishonor for those who rejected Jesus.

This gathering and separating is a final act of grace in action as the Lord Jesus guarantees that not one of those the Father has chosen to receive eternal life will be lost.

With this image fresh in our minds – we're called to attention by Jesus as he speaks. Listen to what Jesus will say on that day: **34) "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed**

**by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35) For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36) I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'...**

Jesus' actions and words make it clear that not all will be saved. God wanted all to be saved. Jesus told his disciples to go and preach the Gospel to all nations. Hell was originally prepared for the Devil and his angels but it will also serve as the place of everlasting punishment for those who rejected Jesus.

First Jesus speaks to those on his right. Jesus' words also make it clear that salvation is a gift of grace – it's not something which one can earn. He speaks of an inheritance prepared from the creation of the world. Since this will be a public judgment, evidence will be presented so that all will see the reason for the verdict which Jesus announces with his words and his actions. Jesus speaks of feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, caring for strangers, clothing those who need clothes, looking after the sick and visiting those in prison. There isn't anything all that spectacular about these activities. Jesus didn't say: I was sick and you healed me... I was in prison and you set me free. Rather he spoke of acts of mercy; acts which any Christian is capable of doing. It is significant that Jesus speaks of those on the right as being righteous. He doesn't mention a single sin that they committed. That's because he has given them his righteousness and removed their sins from them. In faith the Christian lives a life reflecting God's mercy to him. It is true that the righteous will live by faith apart from observing the law yet these works affirm the presence of faith.

Indeed Jesus' words reflect his mercy to us. Our consciences bear witness to Jesus mercy for we know that we have not fed every hungry person we've met. We haven't always been the generous and hospitable and sensitive humanitarians which he gives us credit for being. He remembers deeds which we're not even aware of. **37) "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38) When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39) When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'**

The reaction of the righteous shows that they were not doing these things to gain the Lord's favor. They already had that. They did what they did because it needed doing. Jesus says, you did it to me to indicate that motive – faith acting in love – was the basis for his judgment.

Next we hear Jesus speak to those on his left. **'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' 41) "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42) For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43) I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'**

These words are similar to the ones spoken to those on his right – he mentions the same actions – but concludes you didn't do these things. Here he mentions only their sins of omission – he makes no mention of sins like murder or rape or blasphemy. He wants everyone to understand that even the neglect of simple things is an evidence of unfaithfulness which is worthy of condemnation. In response those on his left try to justify themselves, to make excuses for their lack of love -- **'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' 45) "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'** Their lack of love for Jesus was reflected in their inactivity. It is the lack of faith which condemns them. Their inactivity is cited as evidence that they had no faith in Jesus.

Jesus concludes with a simple but final statement. **46) "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."** Quite naturally our hearts fear such a holy judgment. Jesus' words might frighten us because we feel inadequate to do the deeds the Lord has prepared for us to do. Yet Jesus concludes his teachings about the Judgment day with a promise: "the righteous will inherit eternal life." Here is where the grace of God fills our hearts with hope. Our righteousness is not something which we have done. Paul explains in the book of Romans: **(Romans 1:17) For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." ... (Romans 3:21-24) But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22) This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24) and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.**

We eagerly wait for Jesus to fulfill his promises of eternal life. And as we wait may our works be produced by faith, our labors prompted by love and our endurance inspired by hope in Christ Jesus.

So, dear friends we can confess with confidence: He will come again to judge the living and the dead. This is a message for us to take to heart and it's a message for us to share. So remember the picture Jesus uses to describe that day, remember what Jesus will say on that day and wait eagerly for Jesus to fulfill his promise of eternal life. Amen.