

Sermon for End Times 2 – Last Judgment
November 5, 2017

“God Will Judge”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from the Son of Man who will come to judge the world in glory. Amen.

Dear sheep in God’s flock, the first time the Son of Man came, he came in humility to this world, carried in the womb of a sinful mother, born into a stable, even during his ministry he showed only glimpses of his power and authority by his miracles. The second time the Son of Man comes will be different. He won’t come in humility, he will come in his glory to judge the world.

What a terrifying and awesome day that will be. Look at what Jesus says about the angels. All of his angels will be there. Wow! From the accounts in the Bible where just one angels appears to a human, almost always the first words out of the angels’ mouth are, “Do not be afraid.” That’s the reaction to just one angel. The shepherds out in the fields were terrified. But on the last day, one of the displays of Jesus’ glory will be ALL of his angels coming with him, however many that might be. And he will sit on his throne.

All the nations will be gathered. It could happen that you will be at a cemetery when Jesus returns. It won’t be the zombie apocalypse, but for all the nations to be gathered, that includes all the dead being raised. Can you imagine the armed forces of America rising from Arlington National Cemetery, and all the people in the world who have ever lived will all gather before the throne of the Son of Man to be judged.

And Jesus the Son of Man, by his power and authority, will separate the sheep from the goats, the sheep being believers, placed on his right, and the goats being unbelievers, placed on his left.

So, what’s going to happen? I’m going to go in backwards order this morning and start with the goats in verse 41. The Son of Man will judge unbelievers and send them to eternal punishment.

Here’s how Jesus says that will happen, “He will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire, which is prepared for the Devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you did not give me food to eat. I was thirsty and you did not give me anything to drink. 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, lacking clothes and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not take care of me.’”

Unbelievers will be judged by their failure to do good works – even little ones. These aren’t big things, or particularly hard things to do that Jesus lists. Giving a drink to a thirsty person? That’s something anyone could have done.

But now let’s look at the reaction of the unrighteous. They’re not sorry, they’re not apologizing. They make an excuse. “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or lacking clothes or sick or in prison and did not serve you?” It’s not fair, they say, because they can’t think of a time when they failed. Surely, if anyone met Jesus in person with his glory and power on full display, they would have done whatever he asked.

But Jesus explains their failure more, “Amen I tell you: Just as you did not do it for one of the least of these, you did not do it for me.” Their failure was their lack of Christian love towards other people. They had no love for God, and it showed in their lack of love for other people.

Will that be you? Will Jesus say to you, “Depart from me?” No, you are not a goat in this picture, you are sheep by faith. Here’s what Jesus will say to you, “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. 35For I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. 36I was lacking clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.”

One great preacher of the past, John the Golden Tongue, which you can guess by his nickname what a treat his sermons would have been to hear, in one of his sermons about this very text pointed out that these are not great and mighty things Jesus talks about. Jesus did not say, “I was sick and you healed me. Or, I was in prison and you got me free. He says, you cared for me. You visited me. You got me a glass of water.”

That helps us to remember, these are not great deeds that would impress God and earn a person’s way into heaven. But here is Jesus saying, “You’re comin’ into heaven because you did these little things.” What?

The sheep are confused too, the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? 38When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or lacking clothes and clothe you? 39When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

They don’t make an excuse like the goats – they are trying to talk God out of giving them credit, saying, “You got the wrong people, we would have loved to serve you in those ways, but we didn’t.”

And Jesus explains their righteousness further, “The King will answer them, ‘Amen I tell you: Just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.’”

“You did it for me.” That’s the key to the whole matter. That attitude makes holy and beautiful and pleasing to God a cup of water given to a thirsty person. That attitude only comes through faith.

And it is through faith also that as God washed sin and guilt off of us in baptism, he also washes off the imperfections and the muck and the slime from the pitiful attempts at good deeds we make, so that the good deeds we offer to him are beautiful and good in his sight and he can credit them to us and say, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Share in your master’s joy.”

How wonderful that is, and what a reason to look forward to the last judgment with excitement because you understand what Jesus is telling you, as a Christian, as one of his sheep. He has washed you clean and made you righteous, and also by his grace he accepts and cherishes the good things that you do for him, and on the last day, at the last judgment, he will invite you into heaven, to enjoy an inheritance that’s he’s been working on since the creation of the world for you to enjoy. Amen.

Text: *Matthew 25:31-46*

Jesus explains God's judgment on the basis of works done in faith.

³¹“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴Then 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. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. ³⁶I was lacking clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.’

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⁴¹“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire, which is prepared for the Devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you did not give me food to eat. I was thirsty and you did not give me anything to drink. ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, lacking clothes and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not take care of me.’

⁴⁴“Then they will also answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or lacking clothes or sick or in prison and did not serve you?’

⁴⁵“At that time he will answer them, ‘Amen I tell you: Just as you did not do it for one of the least of these, you did not do it for me.’ ⁴⁶And they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”