

**November 6, 2011**  
**The Last Judgment**

*"Living with the Reality of the Final Judgment"*

**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. <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. <sup>34</sup> "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. <sup>35</sup> 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, <sup>36</sup> 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.' <sup>37</sup> "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' <sup>40</sup> "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.' <sup>41</sup> "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. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> 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.' <sup>44</sup> "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?' <sup>45</sup> "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.' <sup>46</sup> "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."*

A few weeks ago a sixteen year old girl was driving with her dad to the Department of Motor Vehicles to get her driver's license. She was nervous, very nervous. Instead of stepping on the brake, she stepped on the accelerator. The car lurched forward and went through the wall of the DMV office. No one was hurt, but there was a nice hole in the wall. Obviously she was not ready to take her driving test. Remember how nervous you were when you took your driver's test. The examiner held the clip board, ready to write down every little thing you did wrong.

What if Jesus comes back this week in clouds of glory for the final judgment? Will you pass the test? If you are an honest person, and I hope that you are, you will have to admit that there have been some bad moments in your life once again, mostly in the sinful thoughts you carried inside of you that would shame hell itself. If our passing the test depends on us, we are hopelessly lost. If our passing the test depends on Jesus, then we can say with absolute certainty, "I am ready to meet Jesus in the final judgment. He lived for me. He died for me. He rose from the dead for me."

An elderly gentleman once asked if there was a difference between the judgment that happens when we die and the final judgment. Think of this final judgment as the celebration

that comes along with the judgment that takes place when you die. When the Cardinals won the World Series, they celebrated when the last out was made. They celebrated again with a special ceremony on the streets of St. Louis. When you die in Jesus you go home to be with the Lord because of the life he lived for you and the death he died for you. Then you will get to celebrate the victory again when you are raised to life again on the last day. We live each day of our lives on this earth in anticipation of the big celebration that will take place as we stand before God in the final judgment. Let's listen to Jesus as he helps us make this last judgment more real for us in our personal lives.

### **Jesus will come and judge all nations**

Jesus will come in glory to judge all nations. "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 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." When Jesus comes, he will not come secretly to snatch up his church as some claim. When Jesus comes, he will come in clouds of glory, with his holy angels. There will be the loud sound of the trumpet and the shout of an archangel. All the dead will be raised to life and everyone will stand before him in the final judgment as the current heavens and earth are destroyed. All of this will happen in just a moment, only a twinkling of an eye.

Jesus will be on his throne. In the Revelation John writes, "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened...The dead will be judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books." All people will have to stand before the Lord in the final judgment. All will have their books opened. Your husband will be there, your wife, your children, your neighbors and friends. The little children will be there, the kids in elementary school and the college students. The football players who play the NFL games this afternoon will all be there. Adolf Hitler will be there and so will Joseph Stalin. Moses will be there, and Abraham, and David and Paul. My grandma and grandma will be there and my mom and dad. I will be there. No one can escape the judgment that comes with death and the final judgment that goes with it on the last day.

The books will be opened. The people will be judged and placed into two groups just as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. It is hard to imagine a book large enough to record all the things you have done in your lifetime on this earth or even a computer hard drive. The mind of God knows everything about you and about me. Psalm 139 says, "O Lord you have searched me and known me, you are acquainted with all my ways." There is no way I can change the record of sins in that great book. A whole life of goodness on this earth cannot expunge even one small thing I have done wrong. Jesus came to do the impossible. He came to wipe away everything ever done wrong in your life and mine, and he came to put into your account and mine the perfect life he lived for me and for you. Because of Jesus it is possible to know your verdict when judgment day comes.

### **Jesus will welcome the believers into his kingdom**

O my dear Christians, brothers and sisters in Christ, listen to the verdict that Jesus delivers to those who put their hope and trust in him. "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.” The King of kings and Lord of lords does not say, “Come and take the kingdom you have earned by the life you have lived.” No, he says so clearly, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father.” The kingdom of heaven is given to us as a blessing. We think of the words of Ephesians 1 where it says, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.” It was God’s plan from all eternity to connect you to the perfect life and perfect death of Jesus so you could be blameless in his sight.

Jesus describes our inheritance that was given to us through him as a kingdom prepared from the creation of the world. In John 14 Jesus tells us about this kingdom he has prepared for us. “In my Father’s house are many rooms, if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I am going to prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” Think of how eagerly Jesus is anticipating coming in clouds of glory to show us the place he has prepared for us. A little girl was walking with her dad at night and looking up at the stars. She said, “Daddy if heaven is this beautiful on this side, just think of what it will be like on the other side.” The Revelation describes the place Jesus has prepared for us as a place where God will wipe away all tears from our eyes.

In heaven our Jesus will open our eyes to see that the little things we did for others out of love for him were actually done to him. “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, 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 is the vine and we are the branches. Attached to Jesus we are pure and clean and blameless before God. We also produce beautiful fruit out of love for him. The first verse I ever learned in first grade our Lutheran elementary school was “We love him because he first loved us.” We don’t love Jesus to earn his love, we love him because he loved us first and actually earned his love for us.

In this life we are not always aware of all the little things we were able to do for people. You showed kindness to a kid in school that others were teasing. You gave money to some mission so people could hear about Jesus. You prayed for people, especially those who don’t believe. You opened your wallet and gave money to a needy friend. You spoke some much needed words of encouragement. You wanted to be a good parent to your children and you are so aware of shortcomings. In heaven Jesus will have forgiven all the sins and failures of the past, and he will exalt the good things you did as parent out of love for him. The Revelation has these comforting words, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. ‘Yes,” says the Spirit, ‘they rest from their labor for their deeds will follow them.” Jesus allows us the benefit and blessing of seeing all the good things we did because we wanted to serve others because he loved us first.

### **Jesus will send the unbelievers to eternal death**

I wish I could end this sermon here at this point, but that would not do justice to what Jesus tells us about the reality of the last judgment. There will be a separation of people as a shepherd separates the sheep from goats. There are those people who foolishly think they can expunge the record of sin from their account with their lives of good deeds. “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.” Our loving Lord Jesus does not hide from our eyes the reality of a place of eternal suffering and eternal fire. Jesus describes eternal death as a weeping and gnashing of teeth, and a place where the worm does not die.

These people tried to do good to cover their sin but it was not good enough. It is never good enough. “For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat...” These poor unbelievers thought they had done the right things. “Lord when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger or needing clothes or sick in prison, and did not help you?” Jesus tells them where they had failed him. “I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these you did not do for me.” They failed to believe in Jesus as their Savior. Their good deeds failed to honor Jesus for rescuing them. Jesus wants to use you and me to reach out to these people and share the message with them before it is too late.

Are you ready to take the big test? Are you ready to stand before your Lord in the final judgment? You cannot look back at this past week and say, “Lord I have really done a great job and I am ready.” Dear Christian, your hope is in Jesus. Jesus has expunged every sin from your account. He removed the incompletes and “F’s. He puts all A+’s into your account. Because you know the verdict, you want Jesus to return ASAP. Even so Lord Jesus come quickly. Amen.