

Text: Matthew 25:31-46

Theme: Sheep and Goats!

Outline: He shall come to Judge the Living and the Dead

- I. Judge Jesus will come in glory for final judgement
- II. Judge Jesus will give the final judgement based on faithful evidence

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation today is the Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew the twenty-fifth chapter verses thirty-one through forty-six.

Boys and Girls, I pray that you are doing well today. What do I have here? Yep! I have a lamb, a sheep. What sound does a sheep make? They go baa! Sheep need a shepherd. They need someone to take care of them. We are under the care of our great Shepherd, Jesus Christ. In our reading for today, we see our great Shepherd separating the sheep and the goats. How do we know which we are? How does Jesus keep us as His sheep? Ponder those questions as you hear the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

I. Judge Jesus will come in glory for final judgement

As we confess in the Creeds, Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father and from thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. Our Lord's second coming will be unlike His first coming. His first coming was as a baby in a manger, clothed in meekness and humility. When He laid aside His divine power for us men and for our salvation. To live a perfect life in our place and go to the cross, bearing the full weight and wrath of God on our behalf. To make atonement for us by the shedding of His precious and holy blood. Rather than coming in meekness and humility, Jesus' second coming will be in the full power

and glory of the Father, with angels and archangels. He, as the Crucified One, as the One whom full atonement has made, has won the right to be judge over all people.

II. Judge Jesus will give the final judgement based on faithful evidence

Jesus will exercise His power and glory in passing final judgement upon the living and the dead. He will come as a shepherd to separate the sheep from the goats. The sheep, the believers, He will place at His right hand, a place of honor and prestige. The goat, the unbelievers, He will place at His left hand, a place of dishonor and shame. As we confess in the Athanasian Creed, ““At His coming all people will rise again with their bodies and give an account concerning their own deeds. And those who have done good will enter into eternal life, and those who have done evil into eternal fire.””

The King, in the kindest possible words of pure grace, addresses the sheep on His right. They are those blessed of God who know God as Father. Jesus welcomes them into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Why? Since it is a public judgement, evidence must be presented. Jesus mentions feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, caring for the stranger, clothing those who need clothes, looking after the sick, and visiting the imprisoned. These actions are not major and grand actions. They are ordinary daily actions that the sheep did because there was a need at they could meet.

How often do we fail at simple actions! We see people begging on the side of the road, while we are sitting at a stop light. What is our reaction? Just keep looking forward, do not make eye contact. Maybe then they will not approach and ask for money. Maybe we hear of someone need food or drink because they have fallen on hard times. Our sinful nature goes, “You have your food. You have plenty! If you

give to them, you might not have enough. You know the price of groceries, better your mouth than someone else's. It is better that you hold on to what you have. Let someone else help them." Someone comes up to us and asks us for a dollar, not much. Our reaction? No! My money is my money! Leave me alone! Truly, we fail at the simple task of helping the least of our brethren.

Yet, it is significant that those on the right do not have one single sin mentioned against them. They have been freely justified by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. This redemption is so perfect and complete that God is reconciled with the sinner, no longer counting a man's sins against him. Only the good works for the righteous are mentioned- the works for which they were created in Christ Jesus, those good works which God prepared in advance for them to do.

The righteous are surprised at this. They are shocked. They do not question their admittance into the kingdom, but merely the reason why that Jesus gives. "When did we?" Is their question. Jesus' reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." We do not see our Lord behind every good deed. That would harm our neighbor and make him merely a means to an end. Rather, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us, we do these good works simply because the deed needs to be done. As we have seen in the readings for the past few weeks, God has blessed us with lamps filled with faith, He has blessed us with talents, and He blesses us to make use of them in service to our neighbor.

Judgement is also passed on the unrighteous. Jesus says that the goats did not do the simple things in faith. They did not do them even in the basic sense of humanitarian decency as good people. They have no remorse, no repentance or sorrow, no pity. Only bitterness and argument over the perfect judgement of a righteous king. So the King

orders them to depart, cursed, into the eternal punishment. We should note that this punishment is not one prepared originally for them. It is one prepared for the devil and his angels which the unrighteous partake in. God does not desire that the unrighteous go to this place. It is His righteous work that they do not, yet, because of the firmness of their unbelief, accursed they will depart.

Quite naturally, our hearts fear such and holy judgement. We quake at the words of Jesus. We may feel inadequate as Christians to perform any of the good works that God has prepared for us to do. Yet, Jesus ends this discourse on the happy, blessed promise again that the “righteous will enter eternal life.” This is the eternal promise of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

All of this is purely a work of God by His grace. By His grace, He creates and sustains faith, that all our sins have been covered by the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. In grace, God has made you one of His sheep. Sheep prompted by such love for our neighbor, that we labor, not for ourselves, but so that our neighbor is not cast accursed, but join us in the blessed promise of eternal life. Now follow your Good Shepherd in faith, and do the good works God has prepared for you to do. And you will receive the eternal kingdom God has prepared for you, as well.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, guard, and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.