

How Is the Church Different from the World

Matthew 25:14-46

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, March 26, 2017

Well, you guys can go ahead and turn your Bibles to Matthews 25, and don't be nervous, I won't go too long. And as you're turning to Matthew 25, we're currently in a series called "Foundations of the Church," where we are looking at some foundational or fundamental issues in the church. And as we've done that, I mentioned this a moment ago, but we've seen that the church is a very serious thing. It's a big deal to come into the church of the living God. Get this wrong, get church wrong, and you could end up anywhere as a Christian. We've all known people who have gone down a terrible path, because they went to a bad church. And on the flip side, we've all known people who went down a good path, because they went to a good church. I'm guessing that many of you were saved and brought to faith in Christ through a church. You were discipled in a church, baptized in a church, married in a church. Some of you will probably be buried in a church or next to one. If I die, you can bury me under the pulpit. I agree with what George Whitefield said about that. But the church has had a huge impact in your life as a Christian. It's made you who you are today. It's a very serious thing.

Now, D. L. Moody said, "Church attendance is as vital to discipleship as blood to a dying man." And he was right, church attendance is vital; it's necessary, you can't live without it. Augustine said, "He who has God for his Father, must have the church for his mother," and you can take that the wrong way, but the church is a mother to us. It protects us, shelters us. Another author said, "The church is a search and rescue operation. It's a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints." How many of you have ever had a problem and you've come to the church for help? Can anybody raise their hand for that in this room? Yeah. That's what it's there for. That's why it exists. You don't walk into a hospital and say, "What are all these sick people doing here?" Well, of course, they're there. It's a hospital. And you don't come into church, and say, "What are all these sinners doing in here?" Of course, they're here. That's what the church exists for. That's why God made it. Jesus came to seek and to save what was lost. He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners. In other words, He came to call sick people.

Now, I think that we would all say, there's nothing worse than a church that forgets this. There's nothing worse than a church that doesn't feel anything anymore. The story is told of a group of elders who are meeting to talk about the state of their ministry. It was doing very well, people were coming, the church was packed out to the point they couldn't fit everybody in the building anymore. And one of the elders finally said, "That's it. We can't accommodate all these people. We'll just have to say, 'There's no more room.' " To which another elder said, "Okay, let's do that. And let's put a sign out front that says, 'There's no more room. The rest of you can just go to hell.' No one wants to go to a church like that. No one wants to go to a church that says, "We don't care about you people." You have to have some compassion. That's what we're here for. We shouldn't be surprised when people come to us with their problems. We should expect it. We should want that.

Listen, guys, if people don't come to the church with their problems, they're gonna go somewhere else. This is a hospital; it's a search and rescue operation. But as you know, there's

some pitfalls to that, and that's what I want to talk to you about this morning. It's not an easy thing to have compassion in a church. There're all kinds of problems that can come with that and we're gonna talk about this morning. Let me introduce it this way. Donald Grey Barnhouse was a pastor of Tenth Presbyterian church in Philadelphia for about 40 years and the church meant a lot to him. He gave his life to the church. And in an interview, toward the end of his life, someone once asked him, he said, "Dr. Barnhouse, what would happen... What would it look like, if Satan took over your church? What would it look like, if the devil took over your city?" And he said this, "If Satan took over Philadelphia, where I live, all the bars would be closed, pornography would be banished, and the streets would be clean. The people would be polite and full of smiles. There would be no swearing. The children would say, 'Yes, sir,' and, 'No, sir.'" "And the churches?" He said, "Well, the churches would be full every Sunday and Jesus Christ would not be preached." That's not what you were expecting, was it? You thought pornography would be rampant, and the bars would be full, and the churches empty, but according to Donald Grey Barnhouse, if Satan took over a city or a church, pornography would be abolished, the bar would be closed... And Jesus Christ would not be preached. Satan loves it when Jesus Christ is not preached. He loves Christ-less churches. There're all kinds of churches here in Canada and in the US, where I'm from, that the devil loves.

Maybe say it another way: Satan loves Christ-less compassion. He loves it when people help each other, and love each other, and serve each other, and leave Jesus completely out of the picture. He loves it when people have a heart for everything, but God. To illustrate this, Canada's a very compassionate place, isn't it? This is a very caring country, but it's not Christian. You guys understand that, right? Because it leaves Jesus out of the picture. A matter of fact, with the laws that are being passed, it seems like Jesus is being pushed farther and farther away. We love helping the poor here and that's not a bad thing. I would much rather live in a country that helps the poor, rather than hurts them. I was talking with someone the other day and they said, "You know what?" They just went through a terrible tragedy and they said, "If this tragedy happened in my country, my loved one would die, because there's no hospitals to care for them." I would much rather live in a country like this that helps people, but that compassion doesn't make it a Christian... By the way, I originally wrote this sermon with America in mind. I wrote it years ago. I think all this applies to America as well.

For one thing, think about this, consider Jesus never made a dime off of His compassion, but we do. As a society, consider how many lawyers used poor people to sue for millions of dollars, just because they spilled coffee on their lap at McDonald's. It got real quiet in here, just now. This pulpit's rather thick, so if you guys want to throw something at me, I'll jump under. But that's not just an American thing, is it? I remember driving through the streets of LA and seeing buses with lawyers on the back, advertising in Spanish, *Accidentes, accidentes, accidentes*. You don't have to speak Spanish to know what that means. That means, "Call us, if you get in an accident, and we will sue for you. We will get rich off of you." You see the same thing happening with psychologists, who charge \$100 an hour for their counselling. We counsel for free here at Grace Fellowship Church. As a matter of fact, there are members in this congregation who counsel each other all the time for nothing, just out of the kindness of their heart. But our country is full of psychologists who clear hundreds of dollars a day, some of them thousands through counselling. It's a million-dollar industry. And if you add psychotropic drugs into the list, you could be talking about billions of dollars, Fortune 500 Companies, all for the sake of

compassion. If you added that money that's brought in through hospitals and nursing homes... I'm still new to Canada, so I'm learning how it works here... But in the States, if you add in all the money brought in through rehab centres and psych wards, you could be talking about a trillion-dollar industry. And Jesus never made a cent off of His compassion. In fact, in Matthew 8, verse 20, He says, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." Jesus had nowhere to lay His head. He healed people all day long, all day long, and then went outside, and slept on the ground.

He was also compassionate close up, not at a distance. What I mean is that Jesus lived just like the poor people lived, He lived right alongside them. His life was one big search and rescue operation. He didn't just do it once a year at a fundraiser.

Is that kind of thing popular here? Fundraisers are real big in the States. There's nothing wrong with them, they're good things. But in the States, we raise thousands of dollars every year for someone else to go help, while we stay at home and watch TV. I was doing some research on this. I noticed it in the Chilliwack Progress this week, in the local newspaper. There were two articles about a fundraiser for a cancer survivor. It involved a street hockey tournament with some members of the Canucks. And that type of thing's popular, and it's good. You can help people with that, but that's not the way Jesus did it. If Jesus wanted to help a cancer survivor, He would go to the place where the survivor was, and meet with him, and talk with him. And He might do the fundraiser too, but He would go alongside the poor to help them. One pastor wrote about this in the 1800s, he said, "Jesus never instituted a charity ball, where amid the voluptuous swell of the dance, the rustle of silks, the sparkle of diamonds, the stimulus of wine and women dressed elegantly, He would demonstrate His love for the poor." Jesus never helped people with a charity ball. Now, please hear me out, just so I'm clear. I'm not saying it's wrong to do these things. I've said that a couple times. It's not wrong to make money off of your compassion. You can take it too far, but some of you work at hospitals, and in the healthcare industry, and that's fine. God bless you for what you do. And it's not wrong to throw fundraisers. Do it for the glory of God. I'm just saying that doesn't go deep enough. You don't want to just stop there.

Let me say it this way: Canada and the US, we have a lot of people who would do anything to help the poor, but they would never, ever talk about Jesus Christ. As Donald Grey Barnhouse would say it, "If Satan took over our country, the hungry would be fed, the poor would be clothed, the sick would be healed, and Jesus Christ would never, ever, ever be preached." You don't want to do that with your compassion; you don't want to leave Jesus out. Jesus Himself, He said, "You don't want to clean the outside of the cup, but leave the inside dirty." He said, "You don't want to clean the outside of the tomb, but leave the inside full of dead man's bones." Yes, you feed a man. Yes, you give him clothes. Yes, you take care of his bodily illness. By all means, do that, but don't leave the tomb full of dead man's bones. Don't feed him on his way to hell; feed him and help him go to heaven.

By the way, just to put this in perspective, do you know that other religions show compassion too? Christianity is not the only compassionate religion. Muslims show compassion. One of the five pillars of Islam is *zakat* or "charity". You can't get to heaven in Islam, unless you are charitable, unless you give to the poor. Same thing in Hinduism. Charity is one of the ways that Hindus achieve *moksha* or *nirvana*. Agnostics show compassion. Atheists show compassion. The

most atheistic country of all time, the Soviet Union, was compassionate, in a messed-up way. They gave to the poor, and then they shot them, but they gave to the poor. They just thought everybody was poor. But the difference in all this stuff is Jesus Christ. The difference between the church and these other things is that we want to wash the inside also.

And that leads us to Matthew Chapter 25. You didn't think I was gonna get here, did you? You wondered, "Where is all this heading?" It's heading somewhere, I promise. Matthew 25 is a long sermon from Jesus. It's known as the Olivet Discourse. In chapter 24, verse 3, it says that as Jesus is sitting on the Mount of Olives, His disciples asked Him a question, "...what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" And the rest of these chapters is Jesus' answer to that question. And as He gives His answer, He talks about the abomination of desolation, and the great tribulation, and He talks about His return, and He gives several parables to that effect. We just read some of them, but He gives the Parable of the Fig Tree, and the Parable of the Ten Virgins, and of the Tenants. And He concludes with the Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats in chapter 25, verse 31. And in this judgment, He says, "You will go to heaven or hell based on how you treat the poor." Well, that seems to be what He says. He says, "You will be saved or damned based on how you show compassion to people." And I want to look at this with you in detail, because a lot of people point to this, to say that it doesn't matter how you do it. It doesn't matter how you help them. As long as you're helping, it's fine. It's good enough for God. And that's not what this passage says. They say, "As long as you give a cup of cold water, it's fine. It's enough. It'll get you through." They say, "It's the mission of the church to help the least of these. As long as the church is helping the least of these, God is pleased." And that's not quite the case. There's a little more to it than that. And that's what I want to talk to you about this morning.

By the way, just by way of a introduction to the passage, it's important to mention, this is a prophecy. It's not a parable. Parables start out with "like" or "as", and you don't see that here. This is prophetic. This is a declaration of what is to come. It's also important to mention that there's a lot we need to cover before we get to verse 40, which says, "As you do to the least of these, so you do it to Me." That's an important verse in this whole discussion of the mission of the church, but it's gonna take us just a moment to get there. Just hang in there. We're gonna cover some other things first and we'll get to the important verse 40.

If you're taking notes this morning, in Matthew 25, there's verses 31 through 40. As Jesus talks about the end, as He talks about what is to come, He gives us three ways our compassion differs from the world. Here are three ways our compassion differs from the world. We are supposed to be compassionate as believers. This is supposed to be a hospital for sick people. We're supposed to be loving, giving, all those things, but I just showed you other religions are compassionate too. The world is compassionate too. The government of Canada, the US, they're all compassionate. Well, here's some ways our compassion differs from the world. The first one is this: we believe salvation is all of God. That's pretty different, isn't it? We believe salvation is all of God. The world doesn't think that way. Just ask someone on the street, "How do you get saved?" And what are they gonna say? "You be a," what? "good person." Has anybody left their house recently and had a conversation with someone about the Lord? "Be a good person," that's what everybody says. "You earn it. Do good deeds." The church doesn't believe that. Read verses 31 through 33 with me. The Lord says this, it says,

31 But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

“Son of Man” is Jesus’ most commonly used title for Himself in the Bible. He uses it some 90 times or more to remind us that He is a man. He’s a human being, just like us. Also, there was a lot of messianic excitement at the time, and if Jesus called Himself “Son of God”, that might have got Him crucified a little sooner, so He didn’t use that title. He used the title “Son of Man”. And here, He uses it to say that when He, the Son of Man, comes in His glory, when He returns to judge the earth, all the angels will come with Him. And not only will they come with Him, but verse 32 says that, “All the nations will come before Him to be judged.” In other words, this is a great judgment scene. It’s not a great commission. It’s a great judgment scene. This is a picture of the great courtroom of heaven, where all mankind will hear their fate. It must be a pretty big courtroom for everyone to be standing here.

“All the nations” is the idea of, well, just pretty much everybody. And as everyone stands before Him, in one camp, you have those who are going to heaven, and in the other camp, you have those who are going to hell, the sheep and the goats. The sheep and goats were the most common domestic animals in Israel in the first century. They were everywhere, so everywhere you went back then, you saw a sheep or a goat. And sheep were valuable, because of their wool and their gentle nature. Goats were less valuable, because they had no wool and they were pretty ornery. I’m not a farmer, but I’ve been told goats are pretty miserable pets to have. And while they would graze together during the day, at night, the shepherd would separate them. He would put the sheep in the pen close to him; he would let the goats kind of graze on their own. And Jesus refers to that here, “In the end, when the world is finished and God is ready to put it to rest, He’s going to separate everyone into two camps: the sheep, who will be close to Him, and the goats will be farther away.” He will put the righteous at His right hand, which is a place of favour, and He will put the unrighteous at His left hand, which is a place of disfavour ... because we all know that left handed people are weird. (It’s a pretty serious passage, maybe a joke or two might help.) I noticed why Jesus does this in verse 34.

The first couple of verses are the general scene of what’s happening, and then the rest of the passage, He just explains it. I was a Communications major in college and they told us, “When you’re writing a newspaper article, you always put the summary in the first sentence, get their attention, and then you go on, and explain it.” Well, that’s what He does here. He’s got our attention. This is a judgment scene. Now, He’s gonna explain it. In verse 34, it says, “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”

Now, if you pick up on what the Lord is saying here, He’s saying that, “While works play a part in this judgment, the real basis of the judgment is the sovereign blessing of God.” The King will say to those on His right hand, that, “You are blessed,” not “You are worthy,” not “You earned this, but you’re blessed. It was given to you as a favour.” That’s what the word “blessing” means. It means “favour”. It was given to you as a gift. The verse says, “This was prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.”

There's a couple of ways to look at that. One, is that this phrase is repeated in another part of the Bible. I'm gonna read this to you, Ephesians 1:3-4 says, "God blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places and He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." You see the word "blessed" in that verse as well: "God blessed us and He did it by choosing us from before the foundation of the world." If you think about it for a moment, you and I were not around before the foundation of the world, which means that you weren't doing anything before the foundation of the world. I wasn't either, and that's the point. Salvation doesn't depend on us; it depends on God. It's not something that we earn; it's something that He gives by His favour, by His blessing.

And you could look at verse 34 another way, "God created the world in six days, but this kingdom was prepared before all that." Does that blow your mind for a minute? A matter of fact, He's still making it. Jesus said in John 14, verse 3, "I go to prepare a place for you." In other words, "This kingdom, this place for the sheep, was prepared from before the foundation of the world." Jesus is still preparing it today, and can you imagine how beautiful it's gonna be? He created all this in six days. He's been working on heaven from before the beginning of time. But the point that we're drawing out here is that people are not going to be saved by their works. That's not what this is saying.

Now, if you read it and skip over some of these verses, you might come to that conclusion, but the Scriptures are very clear: works are the effect, not the cause of salvation. They are the fruit, not the root of it. When you throw a rock into water and the water ripples, you know what I'm talking about? Anybody skip a rock on the water? You don't say, "Wow, look at what the water did." You say, "Look at what the rock did." When God saves you and you do good works, you don't say, "Look at what I did." You say, "Look at what God did. Look at what He produced in me. Look at what He created in this sinful heart of mine." Works are just evidence of grace and this is important to mention, because no one can be saved by their works, amen? You don't want to miss that.

I was talking to a young man about this several years ago. I mentioned this at a funeral on Friday, but I was talking with this young man and he said, "I don't believe all this election stuff and this stuff beforehand." And he said, "I think I can be good enough to be saved. I can do enough good works for heaven." And I remember this, because a deacon was sitting in the room with me, counselling him, and the deacon asked him the question, "Well, how many do you have to do?" He said, "Let's think real practical here for a minute. You're saying you have to do enough good works to be... Well, how many do you have to do?" Can I answer that question for you? "All of them." If you want to be saved by your works, you have to do every last one of them. And you have to do it every second of your life, and you have to do it outside of your body. You have to do it inside your mind, or else, you'll go to hell. That's why you have to be chosen from before the foundation of the world. That's why you have to be blessed. Spurgeon, who said ... I will go through a sermon one day without quoting Charles Spurgeon, I promise... But Spurgeon said, "God must've loved me before I was born, because afterward, He would have no reason to." That's why you have to be chosen. You're not chosen, because you're special and wonderful. You're chosen, because you're dead in sin.

And let me just ask you, while we're talking about this, are you trusting in your works to be saved? Are you trusting in your good deeds? Are you feeding the poor, and sheltering the homeless, and giving a cup of cold water to someone, so that it will save you? Do you think like that young man, "I can be good enough. I don't need God to do it all"? I think a lot of people think salvation is about some big scale in heaven, and on one side of the scale are all the good deeds you've done, all the sick people I visited, all the money I gave to charity. And on the other side are all the bad deeds that I've done, and the lies I told, and the sins I committed. And the way I get to heaven, is to make the good outweigh the bad. Can I just tell you the world believes that? There's nothing Christian about that idea. A Muslim friend of mine told me that, "In the end, you have to walk a narrow path over a pit of fire. And as you do, swords will come out, and cut off all your evil deeds. That's how you get to heaven." If the swords cut off all your evil deeds and there's any of you left, you go to heaven. Now, I don't know if all Islam believes that, but a lot of people do. It's like the bumper sticker that says, "I owe, I owe. It's off to work I go. I owe God. I have to pay Him back for my sins, so that every time I do something bad, I have to put a good deed on the scale, maybe a real big, good deed. If I sin really bad, maybe I have to give \$10,000 away." The Bible says, "You don't do that." The Bible says, "You can't do that." There's no scale. There's no path over a pit of fire. Salvation was given from before the foundation of the world. It is for those who are blessed, not for those who are worthy, because no one is worthy.

Just a couple passages on this, just to give you some perspective of the scope of this in Scripture, Titus 3:5, it says, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds, which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy." Salvation is according to His mercy; it's not according to deeds, which we have done in righteousness. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that, none of yourselves. It is a gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." You can't boast in your salvation. It's a gift. When you're a kid, and Christmas time rolls around, and your parents buy you a new bike, you don't go to your friends and say, "Look what I bought myself." It doesn't even make sense. Someone else gave it to you. Salvation is the same way. We don't earn it. Romans 9:15-16 says, "For the Lord says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion, so then it does not depend on the man who wills, or the man who runs, but on God, who has mercy.'" That passage says, "You can't run fast enough to get to God. You can't will it to happen." 2 Timothy 1:9 says, "But God saved us and called us, not according to our works, but according to His own purposes and grace, which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity." I think you get the idea. If anyone's going to be saved, God has to do everything. If anyone is going to the right hand in this judgment scene, God will have to put them there. And that leads to another way our compassion is different from the world. We believe salvation is all of God, but we need to balance this out a little bit, 'cause that's what this passage does.

Secondly, we believe that salvation shows itself in works. Works don't save you, but we believe that salvation shows itself in works. Works are important. How many of you have ever met someone who said, "I'm saved by grace! Woo hoo! I'm gonna live it up." Has anybody met someone like that? "That's all grace. I can do whatever I want and go to... Jesus is my get-out-of-hell free pass. He's my fire insurance." The world thinks that way, the Scriptures don't. Look in verses 34-39, just see the importance of works in this passage. You're not saved by them, but look at how important they are to God in verse 34. It says,

34 Then the King will say to those on His right, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation 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 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, "Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? 38 And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?"

And I'll get to verse 40 here in a moment, but just notice, as you read that, the role of works in this passage. It's in several works: visiting the sick, clothing the poor, feeding the hungry. And notice that the phrase "I" or "Me" occurs six times. Jesus says, "I was this and you did this for Me. I was this and you did this for Me." In other words, Jesus takes our works personally. He takes our works toward the poor, as if we were doing it to Him. And let's kind of developed this here.

Strangers, in the first century, were in a tight spot, because there were no hotels back then. There were no Sandman Hotels. That's a new one for me. Sandman, did I get that right? Yeah. I'm saying it right? Sand, okay, good. Okay. I looked it up online. If you wanted to stay somewhere when you travelled, you'd have to stay in a house. You had to stay with a friend in the first century, and if you couldn't do that, then you went without. You remember, Joseph and Mary had to sleep in a manger. I guess they did have some inns back then, but they were pretty rare.

Jesus also mentions nakedness, which was common among the poor, because they didn't have enough money for clothes. He mentions sickness in this passage, which was an issue in an age before modern medicine. He mentions prisons, which were not places of rehabilitation, they were places of torture and torment. And in all these desperate situations, the Lord says, "The righteous helped those in need." They showed compassion like we talked about. They had a heart. They didn't just say, "The rest of you can go to hell."

And their compassion showed that they were saved. I like to tell young people, 'cause young people often ask the question, "How do I know if someone's a Christian?" And I say, "Well, if it has webbed feet, and feathers, and quacks, it's a duck." "How do you know it's a duck?" "Well, it acts like a duck, smells like a duck, it hangs out at ponds." Stop me, if I'm going too fast. If it acts like a Christian, chances are, it's a Christian. People can deceive you, and we take that into consideration, and sometimes time helps to tell what's really going on in someone's heart, but for the most part, if it looks like the real thing, especially over a long period of time, then it's the real thing. Sheep act like sheep; ducks act like ducks. I've heard parents tell me that, "Their kid is really a good kid, but he does bad things, because he hangs out with the bad crowd." I'm sorry to say, "That's not true. Their kid does bad things, because their kid is a bad kid," and that's what you have to deal with. The fruit shows the root. The works show the faith. Martin Luther said, "We're saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone; it's always accompanied by works." And if you don't see those works, you've got a problem.

This leads me to ask as we're looking at this passage, "Is your faith accompanied by works? Does it have anything to show for it?" If the people in your company or the people in your home had you on trial for Christianity, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Do your works glorify God or the devil? Would your works put you on the right hand or the left? If you came in this morning and you said, "Pastor Jeremy, I got hit by a truck on my way to church," I would say, "Where's the proof? Where's the evidence?" If you said, "I became a Christian 10, 20, 30 years ago," we would say the same thing, "Where's the proof?"

It's said that when it comes to moving a piano, there's only three types of people: One who gets behind and pushes, one who gets out in front and pulls, and then one who grabs the piano stool. Are you just grabbing the stool? Are you doing as little as possible in the Christian life? If you are, I want you to look at this passage and be convicted. Jesus didn't die on a cross, so you could do as little as possible for the kingdom of God. The Lord didn't choose you from before the foundation of the world, so you could stay at home and take a nap. Listen, we don't think like the world does. The world says, "If it's all of God, then I don't have to do anything. I can just..." I think one t-shirt said, "Jesus died so I could take a nap." We don't believe that. The Bible doesn't teach that. Romans 6:1 says, "What shall we say then, are we to continue in sin, so that grace may abound?" What does Paul say? He says, "May it never be!" We don't sin, so that grace may abound. We don't live it up, merely because we're blessed. Luke 6:43-44 says, "For there is no good tree, which produces bad fruit, nor does a bad tree produce good fruit, for each tree is known by its fruit." You can tell a tree by its fruit, by its behaviour. If you saw a sick apple tree and it was making diseased apples, you wouldn't just staple new apples on the apple tree, you would say, "Something is wrong inside that tree." Jesus says the same thing. 1 John chapter 2:3-4, it says, "By this, we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." And we could quote some other verses. In fact, there are entire books through the Bible, devoted to this subject of faith showing itself in works. If you read the book of 1 John or the book of James, that's what they're about. You're not saved by your works, but you are known by your works. It has a ripple effect. God throws a rock in the water and the water ripples for all to see.

And that brings us to one more way that the church is different from the world. And this is really the crux of the whole issue. This is what we're trying to build up to here. And that is we believe, that salvation is more than just physical. We believe that salvation is more than just physical. I've really got to point this out to you, because if you just read over this passage and don't understand what it's saying, you might come to that conclusion. Jesus focuses a lot on physical stuff in here. This is the judgment scene of heaven. He says so much about works, and compassion, and good deeds, but there's more than just physical going on here. After telling the righteous, "I was hungry and you gave Me food," in verse 35. They ask Him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink, or sick and in prison?" in verse 37. And Jesus answers this in verse 40, He says, "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly, I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'" Jesus said, "You did this. You did all these good works of compassion toward Me, when you did it to the least of these brothers of Mine."

What does that phrase mean, "The least of these brothers of mine?" Well, if you do a search through the Gospels, you will never see that phrase used about anybody, except Jesus' disciples. Jesus never called anyone brothers, except His followers. He didn't say that about the people of Israel who were lost. He didn't say that about the Gentiles. He said it about those who were loving Him, and following Him, and obeying Him. And the idea here, is that God will judge people based on how they treat His disciples. People will go to heaven or hell based on how they respond to Jesus' followers. Let me say it another way: remember what I said a moment ago, about travellers in the first century, and how difficult it was to be out on the road? Well, when the church first started, everyone was out on the road, because there were no churches yet. Everywhere you went, you were a stranger, and you had to rely on the hospitality of others. And here, in Matthew 25, Jesus tells them that, "Even so, just remember that people will be judged based on how they treat you. As you men go out on the road, just remember, people will be judged based on whether they listen to you or not." There's more going on here than meets the eye. There's more going on here than just the physical. Yes, people will be judged based on their physical works, but more importantly, they're gonna be judged based on spiritual issues, like how they respond to God's people and how they respond to His message.

You can't see Jesus Christ anymore. He's at the right hand of the Father. How do you see Jesus today? Well, you see Him through His church. You see Him through His people. And how the world responds to His people, is gonna be how they're gonna be judged. As they hear the Gospel and give a cup of cold water in response to the Gospel, they'll be saved. Hear the good news of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and then go visit His people in prison, you'll go to His right hand. It's not that we should build wells in Africa and stop world hunger, although there's a place for that. That's a good thing to do, but that's not the point here. The point here, is to tell people about Jesus. And as they respond to that, they will do these good deeds of compassion.

Several years ago, a friend of mine was traveling on a plane back from a third world country, and he was sitting next to a missionary and a volunteer from The Bill Gates Foundation. My buddy's a short man, and he said he was real excited at first, because there was an extra seat beside him, and he thought he was going to get to take a nap. And then somebody sat in the seat, and someone sat in the other seat beside him, and they started talking across him through the whole plane ride. He said he was really bummed out about that. But what they were talking about was their mission. Secular organization; Christian missionary. And after listening to them talk for ten hours on a plane, my friend thought to himself, "What's the difference?" He said, "I can't tell any difference in what they're doing." My friend, people should see a difference, and the difference is that we don't deal with the physical only.

We don't deal with the bread, and the water, and the wells, and leave out Jesus Christ. Listen, you can give a man bread and forget the bread of life, Amen? You can stop world hunger and do nothing about spiritual hunger. You can bring a man water and let him die of thirst in his soul. You don't want to do that. We don't want to do that as a church. We want to find a godly balance of these things. I mentioned D. L. Moody a moment ago, but Moody did a lot to help the poor in downtown Chicago. He ran a lot of homeless shelters and soup kitchens. He did a lot of good work and he said this, it's interesting. He said, "Some say we need to give people bread before we give them the Bible, but I've noticed that, if you give them bread first, they won't listen to the Bible." Now, I don't know if that's right or not, but it's an interesting point. I think you should

give a man bread too, and Moody believed that as well. There's a balance here, but the bread is not the main thing. The physical bread is not all that we do. We don't want to feed a bunch of whitewashed tombs and leave them that way. We want to give them life.

My friends, let me ask you this, do you ever get past the physical? In your conversations with people, do you ever go past the externals? When you talk to friends at work, do you ever get past work? When you talk to friends at school, do you ever get past school? Do you ever ask them, "Well, what do you think of God? What do you believe about Him? Where do you want to go when you die?" That's why you're here. That's your mission on earth. It's been said that there's only one thing we won't be doing in heaven and that's evangelizing, because there won't be any lost people there. You're gonna worship in heaven, you're gonna fellowship in heaven, you're gonna learn theology in heaven for all eternity, but you're not gonna witness to an unbeliever. That's for right now. That's what we do here. So are you telling the lost how to be saved, or do you have a sign out front that says, "There's no more room in here. The rest of you can just go to hell"? We don't want to do that. We want to have a hospital for lost people.

And if you're not doing that, let me show you what'll happen. If you and I are not telling the lost how to be saved, let me read to you the rest of this passage and you can see what will happen to them. Verse 41 says,

41 Then He will also say to those on His left, "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been 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; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me." 44 Then they themselves also will answer, "Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?" 45 Then He will answer them, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me." 46 These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Just as the righteous are judged because of their good works, the unrighteous will be judged because of their lack of good works.

It's interesting as you read this. Jesus is not judging these people based on their bad deeds. He's judging them based on their lack of good deeds. Some people say, "Well, I never killed anybody." Well, these people didn't kill anybody either. And they didn't do anything bad, they just didn't do anything at all. And that could be because they didn't hear the message, or didn't believe the message, or it could be because nobody told them. It could be because nobody went past the physical with them. You don't want to be responsible for that. You don't want their blood on your hands. As a church, we don't want their blood on our hands. You want to tell them, show them some compassion, and tell them about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The church isn't like the world, it's different. And we believe salvation is all of God, we believe salvation shows itself in works, and we believe salvation is more than just physical. We can do things to help people on the outside. I think there's a place for that, but it's secondary to helping their souls.

On the side streets of Cairo, Egypt, there's a tombstone, which says, "William Borden, 1887 to 1913." To most people, that doesn't mean much, but William Borden was a man of great compassion. He was a Yale graduate who inherited millions of dollars, and then became a Christian, and gave it all away. And then he boarded a ship for Egypt to start a missionary work there, and he died four months later, after contracting spinal meningitis. And on his tombstone, just below his name, someone scribbled these words. They said, "Apart from faith in Christ, there is no explanation for such a life." Can I just say, this morning, that there is no greater compliment you could give a man than that? "Apart from faith in Christ, there is no explanation for such a life." There's no greater compliment you could give a church than that. "Apart from faith in Christ, there's no explanation for such a life." "Apart from faith in Christ, there's no explanation for Grace Fellowship Chilliwack," we want that to be said of us. We want people to leave our doors and say, "I don't get that at all. If Jesus Christ is not real, then that church makes no sense." That's what we want. We don't want them leaving us and saying, "I see the same thing happening with the world." We want them to notice the difference.

This world needs a hospital. Amen? This is a sick and dying world. We want to be that. We want to have compassion, and we want our compassion to stand out apart from everything else, and make no sense, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's pray this morning and ask for God's grace to help us do that.

Heavenly Father, this is a difficult thing to balance. In one way, we're very grateful for the things that are happening in the world to help people. Lord, there's a lot of common grace around us and we're so grateful for that. We're so grateful for the hospitals in this world. We're so grateful for the lost people that do all kinds of things to help one another. Lord, that's ... We are not trying to tear that down. We just want to make sure we get our mission right. And we pray for help in that, Father. Lord, I pray this morning would have been a clear message to that effect. I pray that each individual person here would have a life that does not make sense, apart from your Son. Lord, may our church be pointed in that direction. May this church continue to be a compassionate place; it is now. And I just pray that it would be for all time, and Your name would be glorified. And we pray this all in Christ's name. Amen.