

Well, good morning; how are we? Good, good! I want to give a quick shout-out to my people joining us in our online community! I'm so glad you are a part of the Foothills Family and that you're with us in worship and studying God's Word from wherever and whenever you're at. Well, if I haven't been able to meet you, my name is Doug; I'm one of the Pastors here, and I would love to connect with you on the patio after we worship together. So, be sure to come and say hi.

We continue today in our parable's series in Matthew chapter 25. So, if you've got your Bibles, which I hope you do, if you could open up with me to Matthew, chapter 25, that's where we'll be camping out.

In today's parable Jesus paints a picture of the final judgement, revealing a surprising truth about our everyday actions and attitudes and urges us to consider how we use what He's given us. So let's dive deep into the text and let's explore what Jesus is calling us to notice and act upon in our own lives.

Matthew 25 verse 31, **31**"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. **32** Before Him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. **33** And He will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left."

There are a couple things in these opens verses I'd like to expound on. I'd like to make sure we're all up to speed about what is happening here so that we can better understand what's happening in verse 31 when Jesus says, "when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne."

In the previous chapter, chapter 24, we have the Olivet Discourse that Pastor Dillon mentioned last week. In it, Jesus teaches His disciples about the end of the age. He walks the disciples through what is going to happen and makes them aware that tribulation is coming. Meaning there will be a period of intense hardship, distress, and suffering for the people of God. But, Jesus goes on in Matthew 24, verse 29 to say, **"29** Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. **30** Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. **31** And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

At this point in the Scripture Jesus begins to use some parables to help his disciples and us better understand what He's getting at. He talks about the fig tree, the ten virgins, and the parable of the talents that Pastor Dillon shared last week. Jesus then comes back to what he was saying in Matthew 24.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light," it goes on "the sign of the Son of Man will appear," and Jesus says in Matthew 24, verse 31, **"31** And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Okay, now, let's jump forward to Matthew, chapter 25 verse 31, **"31** When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. **32** Before Him will be gathered all the nations..."

So, are we all together?! At the end of the age, there will be a great tribulation, Jesus is warning His followers that there will be a period of suffering, distress, and despair. But! Then He will return and He will gather His elect, His followers, those who confess that Jesus is Lord and believe in their heart that God raised Him from the dead, those people are going to be gathered up and then there's the second half of verse 32, "and He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. **33** And He will place the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left."

It's pretty familiar with many of us that Jesus is referred to as the Good Shepherd and that those of us who have made the conscious decision to submit our lives to Him, to follow and obey Him are referred to as His sheep. For example, in John 10:26 Jesus is explaining to some people that He has revealed Himself to them as the Messiah and says, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, **26** but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. **27** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. **28** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."

it's pretty clear that when Jesus refers to His sheep, He refers to those of us who are followers, disciples, Christians. But, interestingly in this verse we hear about goats too, "as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. **33** And He will place the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left." It was pretty common for the shepherds to take out both their sheep and their goats to eat and travel. But, there were times that the shepherd would have to separate them. In the winter months in particular, the goats would be taken inside and separated from the sheep because they just don't have the same protection that the sheep have from the elements.

But Jesus paints a really vivid picture when He says, "He will place the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left." In the ancient world, and particularly in Jewish culture during the first century, the right hand was

considered a place of honor, power, and privilege. To sit at the right hand of someone, especially a king or ruler, symbolized a position of favor, trust, and authority. This is why, throughout Scripture, we often see references to people or beings sitting at the right hand of God as a place of exaltation.

Now, the left side was different. It was often considered a place of lesser honor or even disfavor. It was not necessarily a position of outright shame, but the left hand did not carry the same connotations of power and favor that the right hand did. The left side was associated with weakness or less prominence. So, when someone was placed on the left, it was indicative of a lower status or less favorable judgment.

So, when Jesus describes this image in this passage and places the righteous on His right and the unrighteous on His left, He is drawing on this cultural understanding to convey a really powerful message. The righteous, those who have lived out their faith through acts of compassion and love, are honored and given a place of favor at His right hand. They are the ones who inherit the kingdom, the ones blessed by the Father. This position reflects not just their status as God's chosen people but also the eternal reward and glory they are to receive.

On the other hand, the unrighteous are placed on His left, symbolizing their rejection, disfavor, and the judgment that awaits them. Their position on the left highlights their separation from God's favor and the eternal consequences of their actions—or lack of actions.

This imagery would have been very clear to Jesus' listeners. They would have immediately understood that to be on the right was to be blessed and honored, while to be on the left was to be rejected and condemned.

So, you can imagine that ears are perked. Everyone is sitting on the edge of their seats as Jesus is teaching about the end days. Teaching about great suffering and grief on the Christians, but, now, Jesus is describing the favor and honor they will receive. It's clear,

King Jesus will return, and He will judge His creation.

And so Jesus continues to explain what will happen in verse, **34** Then 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. **35** For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, **36** I was 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, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? **38** And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? **39** And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' **40** And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'"

So we have this picture of a court. The King, Jesus, is seated on His throne. He has gathered every person on earth and separated them. To His right are all of those who have submitted their lives to the Kingship of Jesus, Christians, true Christians, not just those who claim to be Christian. But actual Christians.

To the King's left are all of those who have rejected Jesus. They have denied that He is God. They have denied, that He is King. And they have refused to submit their lives to His Sovereignty. He looks to those on His right and says in verse 34, "'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" This is awesome! If you are a believer, if you're an actual Christian this is big news! This is a huge deal. This is a game changer!

Now, if you are sitting here wondering...wait, am I going to be part of that? That is a great question! And King Jesus reveals the fruit of the elect, those who are actual believers. He says, "**35** For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger

and you welcomed me, **36** I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

It comes down to your works! Haha, okay. Not exactly. Some of you panicked right there. Okay, stay with me on this.

Jesus describes the life of those who are to inherit the kingdom prepared for them and He lists a bunch of "works." In our Protestant world this is really scary. Like our whole thing is salvation by faith alone. And that's right, that is true according to the Scriptures.

Friends, the reality is that True faith results in action.

James, the earliest written Scripture we have from 45A.D. says in chapter 2 verse 14, "**14** What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? **15** If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, **16** and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? **17** So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

What Jesus is saying, what James is saying, is that your faith in Jesus Christ is what saves you. It is the foundation upon which everything else happens. It is the branch that connects to the vine who is Jesus. Then, from the vine, into the branches out comes the fruit, that is the works... they come out of that faith that is established in Jesus.

Friends, True faith results in action.

Jesus explains, **35** For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, **36** I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

The believers were very confused, because they don't remember of seeing Jesus in any of those situations and so He says something very, very, interesting. Check out verse, **40** And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'"

Those listening just had an "ahh ha" moment. It's a bit hard for us, because things doing always translate well, and we tend to read at a pretty fast pace and miss things. But I really want us to understand this, because Jesus was making a pretty strong statement here. Jesus identifies who it is that they clothed, that they fed, visited, and welcomed. He said, "the least of these, my brothers." He identifies it them as "my brothers." In the Greek language that is οὗτος ἀδελφός. This same term is used throughout the Gospel of Matthew 38 times and without exception means biological sibling or spiritual sibling whether Jew or follower of Jesus. In the same way, when Jesus describes them as the "least of these" it is only ever used describe someone's literal size or as a metaphor for followers of Jesus.

New Testament and Greek scholar, Craig Blomberg explains that "it is best to see Jesus as teaching that people will be judged at the final assize based on the ways in which they have treated the Christian destitute and neediest [Christians] of the world and especially those who proclaim the gospel to them (Blomberg, p. 399-400).

I think it's quite normal for people to read quickly through this text and get, oh, we need to care those in need. Well, yes, that is true. However, in regard to this specific text, Jesus is specifying that as His heirs, His followers, His sheep, it matters that we care tangibly and practically for those Christians who are in need. Those are who Jesus is saying will be seated to His right. Who will inherit the kingdom.

Friends, To neglect the King's people is to neglect the King.

Jesus takes it very personal how His followers are treated. I mean, even Paul, if you're not sure who that is, Paul was a Jewish religious leader who hated Christians. He wanted to wipe them out, eradicate them completely. He was in the process of persecuting Christians and as he was traveling to round up more of them, Jesus appeared to Paul. Now, this is crazy, because it had been months and months since Jesus had died on the cross. And now, here He is face to face with Paul. And Jesus says, "why do you persecute Me (Acts 9:4)?"

Well, that's a strange question because Paul, from what we know wasn't a part of Jesus' crucifixion. But, he was persecuting the followers of Jesus. See, Jesus identifies Himself with His followers. When you persecute the Christian, you persecute Jesus Himself.

When you neglect to care for the people of God, you neglect God.

We see the same thing in Matthew 10. Jesus says, "Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me." He continues in verses 41-42 to emphasize that receiving His disciples and caring for them is equivalent to receiving and caring for Him.

Friends, To neglect the King's people is to neglect the King.

Now, I want to keep in front of us, that caring for the people of God isn't the salvific requirement. Remember, it is faith that saves. But! It is our faith lived out in action that is, hear me, evidence of your faith.

This is why in the next passage Jesus responds to those on His left, those who are not inheritors of the Kingdom, those who are not blessed, but the opposite, cursed, they are not these things because they never submitted their life to the King, they were not followers of Jesus, and their lives reflected that.



Look at verse 41 with me, **41** "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. **42** For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, **43** I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' **44** Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' **45** Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' **46** And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

This is a very hard and sobering reality.

In God's kindness, in His compassion, He chose to humble Himself, to step off His throne where He resides in eternity being worshipped by countless angels singing HOLY HOLY HOLY are you God almighty! Holy! Completely pure, perfect and separate than anything else! HOLY HOLY HOLY!

Yet, in Kindness and humility, He took the punishment that we each deserve, He put that guilt on Himself because He knew there was no way to be made right, to be blessed, to be with Him, if He didn't pay the price for us.

And the ultimate offense to Him is to reject Him. To reject His gift. His gift of salvation and right standing before Him, the King. And with that reality there is no more right consequence than for the King to declare, , 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" Notice! The eternal fire was not prepared for them!

Jesus says the eternal fire was prepared for the devil and his angels! Not people! But the reality is, people are sinful. They are selfish. They are prideful, arrogant and have rejected the most generous gift ever

imaginable. The gift of life with the HOLY HOLY HOLY God who has declared us as His inheritors, as His blessed children.

This passage is a painful reality for those who have not placed their life, placed their trust, who have not put faith in Jesus. But, it is an opportunity for those people to hear the Truth about what the King has done and to make a decision today to turn from your current life and to pursue a life with Jesus as your King, Lord, Forgiver, and Savior.

Now, for the Christian, it is a great reminder that we have been blessed with resources, strengths and giftings from the Holy Spirit that are to be used to care for the Christians who are most in need.