

# LIVING WITHOUT REGRET

An exposition of Matthew 25:31-46  
at West Hills San Jose on October 18, 2020

**PASTORAL PRAYER:** Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

1. We pray that your name would be worshipped today all over the world
2. We pray that your Son would be exalted in the earth, and that all the nations would be gathered toward Him by His grace.
3. We pray for the lost, and all without Christ. Seek and save the lost. Please raise up from among us those who go across the street, go across the city, for the sake of the lost. Raise up from among us those who will GO across the oceans and continents to bring Christ to those without him.
4. We pray for our missionaries. For the Jourdans and for Shelley Conradson. Would you bless and empower them by grace.
5. Pray for Joni and Friends and for our evangelism teams to the incarcerated.
6. We pray for our national, state and local government; would you enable them to preserve the social order and welfare of our society. That all of us as individuals would be able to live a quiet life, godly and dignified in every way, and that together as a church, we would be free to gather to worship and to scatter to evangelize without the threat of harm or punishment.
7. Would you guide our leaders into wisdom and righteousness, and bring them LORD, to faith in yourself.
8. We pray for the many other local churches in San Jose who love God and preach your gospel. We pray for Mercy Hill and their ministry to the Santa Theresa neighborhood. We pray for Orchard community church and their ministry to Campbell and for Cambrian Park Baptist and Lincoln Glen Community Church and for our West Hills Morgan Hill campus. I pray that you would bring forth spiritual fruit, the gift of unity, the power of faithful living, and the preservation of the gospel among our brothers and sisters.
9. Lord we pray for our own local gathering, this small family of disciples, help us to love each other well. Help us to be patient with one another bearing with one another, and if anyone has a grievance forgiving each other. We pray that your Son would be exalted among us. I pray that His gospel would be in our hearts and on our lips. I pray for our time together now, that you would draw us into your worship, that you would speak to us through your Word, and that you would Transform us by Your Spirit. Feed us Lord, our eyes and our hearts look to You. In Christ's name, Amen.

**PROBLEM:** Well grace and peace church family! This morning, on this glorious Parousia Sunday, I want to talk about living without regret. Do you ever deal with the feeling of regret? Do you ever look back on things that have happened and feel that pinch of sadness over how you handled something, or a sense of discouragement in yourself over something you wish you had done or wish you had said? If so, you have experienced regret. Regret is the feeling you feel, when you have gained a more complete perspective on the implications of your actions, and you realize that if you would have handled things differently at the time they COULD have gone a lot better. Or at least, not as bad.

Regret comes with hindsight. Hindsight is being able to look back and see how an entire situation played out. There is a common saying, that hindsight is 20/20. And what that expression means is that if I could know how things would have ended at the beginning, I would be a lot better at life. I would have a lot less regret. I would act in such a way, that I could realize the conclusion I chiefly desire.

And every year, I like to take a week out of the year for Parousia Sunday. And I like to do that to remind us, that the doctrine of the end times is not about you knowing weird things about the end of the world. When Christ and His apostles revealed the promises of what is to come, they were aiming at delivering you from future regret. Jesus wants to grant you 20/20 hindsight from the beginning, so that you're end would be marked by blessing, by gladness, by thankfulness, by relief...instead of regret.

**MAIN POINT:** Christ reveals the future to transform your present, so love Him with all your heart

**SETTING THE CONTEXT:** Please open your bibles to Matthew 25. This year, we will be looking at what is probably a familiar text to most of us, but we will be considering together what it has to say to us about our life in the here and now. Matthew 25:31. Now let me draw us into the context of this passage and then we will get into the message for today.

The Lord Jesus is about three days from being crucified. He is walking home with his disciples from the Temple after delivering a powerful message of condemnation to the Pharisees and the temple priests. It has always seemed to me like Christ knows how close he is to bringing his earthly ministry to the end, and so he is just being as explicit and as clear as he can be with everyone. And as the Lord and the disciples are walking home, He begins revealing things about coming tribulation, and about the signs of the times, and eventually about His return at the end of the world. And leading up to our text, we find two parables about the return of the Lord. The parable of the ten virgins and the parable of the talents. The first parable is about being ready for the Lord's return, being ready because no one knows the day or the hour. The second parable is about being faithful over the Lord's resources, seeking His profit and not our own.

And both parables have a forward looking emphasis...the Master of the house is coming...and Christ wants to consider with you, how your present actions will impact your fate at the Masters return. And that is the context in which receive Christ's final teaching on this, before He is handed over to those who will put Him to death.

**READING:** Matthew 25:31–46 [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. [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.'

[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.'" (ESV)

**PRAYER:** Lord grant us insight and wisdom to understand, that our lives would be changed

**ROAD MAP:** 1.) What kind of text this is, 2.) What this text teaches, 3.) What this text is for

#### WHAT KIND OF TEXT IS THIS?

1. So having just uttered two parables of coming judgement, the natural reflex of the reader is to expect this passage to be a third parable. A third parable concerning the judgement of mankind, and yet we are met with an entirely different kind of introduction.
2. Verse 31 "When the Son of man comes in His glory and all his angels with Him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations..." Contrast this with the two texts that have come before, look down at Matthew 25:1 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like...ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom." Christ introduces the first parable with a definitive statement that he is speaking parabolically. The Kingdom will be LIKE something else.
3. Jump ahead to verse 14 to the parable of the talents. "For it will be LIKE (presumably the coming of the king and his kingdom), a man going on a journey...who called his servants and entrusted to them his property." It, the kingdom and the coming king...will be LIKE something else. Christ is clear that he is speaking parabolically...he is using familiar examples to teach about less familiar realities. That is clearly what Christ is doing in the first two parables.
4. But then we come to verse 31, and what happens from a literary perspective in verse 31? Christ isn't talking about what things will be LIKE...anymore...He is asserting what WILL BE. Not what IT WILL BE LIKE. He is describing the sure and certain future of every man, every woman, and every kid in this room, and streaming on livestream.
  1. And the fact that this section uses the metaphor of sheeps and goats as well as similes "as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats", doesn't alter that fact. This isn't a parable...this is a prophecy. And to be more specific, it is a prophecy of coming judgement.
  2. And this is a prophecy of coming judgement in a book full of prophecies of coming judgement. And it's worth briefly reflecting together on why God, gives these to His

people. Think about prophecies of judgement in the Scripture...why does God utter them through His prophets? Why did God tell Moses He would not go up with them to the land after the golden calf incident? Why did God send Jonah to Nineveh, why did God send Ezekiel outside the city to shave his beard and scatter some to the wind, and to strike some with the sword, and to take a few pieces and conceal them in his belt?

3. What is God always trying to accomplish in those situations? He wants people to repent and be healed!! He wants people to receive their discipline with faith in their God and with hope for the future.
4. God brings oracles of coming judgement in love. I've heard it said before that they way you can tell the difference between correction from God and the condemnation of the devil...is that correction from God always ends with hope. That is almost universally consistent in Scripture. It always points to a clear and straight forward way out. The devil condemns and just leaves you there. The devil tears you down and haunts your conscience with a murky, unspecific guilt. God's correction, God's oracles of judgement are aimed at increasing clarity, they are aimed at showing sin to be sin, and righteousness to be righteousness. The devil's condemnation is aimed at showing guilt to be guilt and shame to be shame. God's prophecies of coming judgement...point you up toward the God of mercy, to point you back in your heart to the God who forgives sin...the devil points you anywhere and everywhere else.
5. What kind of text is this...I want you to understand...this is a Word of love. I warn my children not to run out into the street because I love them and I don't want them to die. God utters prophecies of judgement because HE LOVES YOU and doesn't want YOU to die. God in this text SHOWS US...what a faithful life looks like, so that we would strive to be faithful to Him. And He wants us to strive to be faithful to Him because it is the faithful who enter the kingdom prepared before the foundation of the world. And he warns us about what a faithless life looks like so that if we have been faithless we would repent and pursue faithfulness.
6. What kind of text is this? This is a prophecy of coming judgement. This is not a parable... this is not a story that likens something to something else...this is the sure and certain future that awaits every man, woman and child who can hear my voice. I pray that you will listen closely to what our Lord has to say. Let's now turn our attention to what this text teaches.

#### WHAT THIS TEXT TEACHES

1. Now this text isn't complicated, and I'd be willing to bet that the grand majority could have summarized this passage for me if I asked you before we read it out loud. But there are a few details that are really important to notice.
2. First, in verse 31 is the word WHEN. This text does not say IF the Son of Man comes...this text says WHEN the son of man comes. The Father has appointed a day when Christ His Son will return and judge the world. Paul says in Acts 17:31 "For He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man He has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."
  1. Do you ever think about that? Like one of these Sunday mornings we might be hanging out here and talking about how the weather is and all of a sudden BAM...we are naked

and exposed completely before the Lord of glory and we will be giving an account for how we have lived? Part of the reason I've never really felt compelled to spend much time obsessing over timelines and what signs mean about the coming of the Lord is because when I think about standing before the king to give an account...other things just seem so much more important...worshipping Him, loving my neighbor, showing kindness to my enemies, giving to those in need. It's not that those things are bad...they just seem so much less important than being ready to meet my God with a clear conscience.

3. That day has been set...Just as God promised that Christ would come and die and rise...so He has promised that Christ will come again on a determined date...and all people will be gathered before him for judgement, even people who identify as Christians. **WHEN HE COMES.**
4. Second: Before Christ, verse 32 will be gathered ALL. And at this gathering will be corporate groups all the nations...and individuals...and he will separate people one from another ,as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.
  1. There is no exceptions from this judgement. It's important that all of you guys understand this. Kids listen to me. The Lord Jesus could return tonight. This very night the King could come and set up His throne in the middle of the world. And he isn't going to ask you if you have obeyed mom and dad. He isn't going to ask you if you have been good. He isn't going to ask you if you paid attention when your daddy reads you the bible.
  2. Do you know what King Jesus is going to care about? Did you repent of your sins and trust in Jesus to save you. Listen to me. Heaven isn't for the good kids. Heaven is for the people who know that they have sinned...and believe that Jesus died for their sins to save them and to recuse them from God's judgement. That is what will matter most when Christ comes. But that won't be the only thing that matters.
5. Third: how we have lived, will reveal what we really are. It says in verse 33 that Jesus will place the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left. The sheep will be placed at the place of honor and the goats will be moved away from the place of honor. And the Lord will explain to the sheep that the way they lived showed Jesus that they have been changed by his love. But the Lord will also explain to the goats that the way **THEY** lived, has shown that they were **NOT** changed by His love.
  1. Now it's worth stopping for a moment and asking the question honestly, "is Jesus teaching us that if you do good things you will be saved, but if you do bad things you will be condemned?" It kind of sounds like that, doesn't it?
  2. It's worth pointing out two things...first, that interpretation would run radically against the grain of the rest of Scripture that wants to clearly insist that we are saved by faith and not by works. But second, there is evidence in the text itself that would militate against that kind of thinking.
  3. Look down at verse 34, then the king will say to those on His right, namely the sheep, and say Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. **FOR** I was hungry...

4. It seems like when the sheep meet Christ, he already knows them. And after he declares them blessed He suggests that their inheritance was prepared from the foundation of the world. And this inheritance wasn't prepared for those who would earn it...this inheritance was prepared FOR YOU...for the sheep. For those who would one day live faithfully for Christ. It was **prepared** for them...the idea is deliberate preparation...the making of something ready for something specific.
  5. This implies destiny. And to be clear that idea is not explicit, it's implicit here. But when you take it together with verse 41, where the wicked are cast into an eternal fire PREPARED for the devil and his angels...same root word in the greek...it seems like destiny is strongly implied. The righteous have one fate PREPARED for them...and the wicked have a different fate that was PREPARED for the devil.
  6. So if what I'm saying is right...that Jesus is saying to each group, enter into the destiny ordained for you...than what is happening at judgement is people are being revealed for what they really are.
  7. To say this more simply...if you love Christ, you will love others. And if you love others it will express itself in concrete ways over your life-time. And when you and I get to the end...our works will play a role in our judgment. Not that they play any role in saving us...but they play a role in revealing who we really were, believers or non-believers. I hope that makes sense.
6. The fourth thing I want to do is compare Christ's response to each group. He says in verse 34 to the sheep, COME, you who are blessed by my father and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Jump down to verse 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.
1. There is a lot of complex theology in here that I'm not going to deal with today. But just do a simple contrast. If you spend your life living for Christ, doing good to His people... your destiny is fellowship with Christ, blessing from the Father, and the inheritance of an eternal kingdom. If you don't spend your life living for Christ and doing good to His people...you will be cast away from fellowship with Christ, you will be cursed by the Father...and you will be sentenced to an eternal fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels.
  2. I've always appreciated the clarity that Christ gives, concerning the different futures that lay before us. We can bend the knee to King Jesus and serve Him with this life, and enter into life everlasting, or we can bend the knee to King Me and my own opinions and values and live for the things that I think are most important and enter into an accursed future in eternal fire with the devil. Those are Jesus' words...and they are not confusing.
  3. The choice is laid out simply before you...hindsight is offered to any and all who want to live a life they will not regret. Will you listen? Will you heed the Words of my King? Will you resolve in your heart not to hide from the needs of other Christians. To stand aloof from the poor and from the suffering believers across the world. Jesus is concerned with how you treat the least of these HIS BROTHERS in verse 40.
  4. God, of course wants us to show kindness to all people, but ESPECIALLY to the household of faith. I know many of you do this. And it gladdens the depths of my soul

every time I see it. And it gladdens me because I know the future...I make myself stare across the chasm into the destiny God has revealed concerning your soul and I hear "well done good and faithful servant." I hear "as you did it to the least of these my brothers you did it to me." And my heart rejoices. Is that what you hear when you see generosity in one another? Is that what you hear when you choose generosity yourself? This text isn't here because your generosity ISN'T A BIG DEAL...it's here because it IS A BIG DEAL. Don't minimize what God counts significant.

7. Fifth and finally, I want to look at what Christ says about this people and how the people respond. Ya know, the tendency for many of us, when we read texts like this, especially if you have a tender conscience, is to go...have I done enough? And for some of you that is a question you really should be asking...but probably for most of you, that may not be the most helpful question and I want to show you what I mean.
  1. It's really interesting how the King phrases things. He says to those on the right: I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink I was a stranger and you welcomed me. So on and so forth. To those on the left he says verse 42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'
  2. When Christ looks at those on the right...he doesn't say you fed me perfectly in every circumstance every time. He says when I was hungry you gave me food. In verse 42 when he speaks to those on the left...he says For I was hungry and you gave me no food. The contrast isn't between those who do a good job at this and those who do a bad job. I think the contrast is between those who try and those who don't try. Those who offer to help when they see a need, as opposed to those who NEVER help.
  3. And I want to point that out because I don't think this text is aimed at terrorizing and tender consciences...I think it's aimed at encouraging righteousness, and convicting sin. Not awakening a vague sense of guilt...but calling our attention to notice if there are concrete ways that we are actually being disobedient to serve those in the body with a need.
  4. And the final reason I say that is because of the way the people respond to Christ. In verses 37-39 and in verse 44, the sheep and the goats respond to Christ in the exact same way. When did we see you hungry and thirsty or naked or so forth. And Christ answers them in opposite ways. In verse 40 as YOU DID IT to the least of these my brothers you did it to me. Verse 45 As you DID NOT DO IT to the least of these, you did NOT do it to me. Neither group really noticed what they were doing.
  5. I wasn't able to find a commentary with what I felt was a satisfying answer to why the righteous don't understand what they were doing. And so here is my best guess, as a pastor, as someone who meets with a lot of people and listens carefully to a lot of hearts. Those who really love Christ...never feel like they have done enough. Those who don't really love Christ rarely feel like they haven't done enough.
  6. And in this text...Christ tells both groups, that the way you treat those in the body who are in need, is the way you are treating me. IN other words, when you see one another, I

want you to see me. When I tell you to love one another, I want you to love me, by loving them.

8. This is what this text teaches, judgment is coming, how we have lived will reveal who we actually are. And there is a real destiny that lies before us, either eternal life or eternal sorrow, and this is intended to encourage us toward righteousness and convict us if we are in sin. Christ has offered you the gift of hindsight from the beginning. Will you receive it and respond by living a life you will not regret? So we have seen what this text is, a prophecy of judgment, we have seen what it teaches, now lets close by considering what this text is for.

#### WHAT THIS TEXT IS FOR

1. The theology of the end times, known as eschatology, the doctrine of judgment, these words make it seem like the last things are an obscure academic field of study. But when the apostles and the Lord Jesus spoke about these things they had real, material implications for your life as a Christian.
2. This text isn't here to teach you...this text is here to change you. Well I guess it's technically here to do both but I hope you see my point. The emphasis of these things is that you would understand them and be changed. Christ reveals the future to transform your present. He shows you the end from the beginning so that you would love Him with all your heart, and live a life free from regret.
3. So Josh, you've got my conscience in a precarious place...what should I do with this? Same thing you do with every sermon...repent and believe the gospel. If you have sinned confess it to God, tell him the truth. And receive the grace that can only come through Christ Jesus. The goal isn't to guilt you into action, the goal is to grace you into action. What does that mean...it means you live this way by bringing your heart and soul and mind back to the reality that Christ came in the flesh...and while I was His enemy He died for me, to reconcile me to God, so that my sins could be forgiven, and to make me a new creation. And when I see the desires of my heart are out of sync with the desires of His heart...I ask Him to change me. To convict me, to lead me into righteousness.
4. And once you've received the grace found in the gospel...look around. We are taught that the needs of the people around you are Christ's needs. When you feel hungry church...Christ hungers with you. When you see someone hungry church, you are seeing the hunger of Christ. And what we give to the least of these we give to Christ and to the Father who sent Him. Loving Christ means loving His people. And we love His people, tangibly. We are called to love in word and in deed.
5. This is what this text is for, it is here to reveal the future in order to transform you in the present that you would love Christ...by loving His people. And if you listen to His words and heed my voice...you will one day stand before our King...without regret.

COMMUNION: Before we dismiss to go and do...Christ calls us to respond by coming to receive. Come and receive the symbols of His grace. As He calls you to physically nourish and care for your brothers and sisters...He wants to physically nourish and care for you.



Call and response: The call and response is intended to help you embrace by faith the Word of God. I am asking you questions and you are responding with how God's Word answers these questions. And the goal is that to the Word of God, you would join your faith.

Pastor: Why are we here?

Church: Because we know the LORD, that He is God, and it is He who made us and we are His; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. (Ps 100:4)

Pastor: What is your Maker like?

Church: Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. (Isaiah 40:28)

Pastor: What kind of love has the LORD shown to us?

Church: He has called us the children of God, and so we are. (1 John 3:1)

Pastor: What is our hope for the future?

Church: that when Christ appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. (1 John 3:2)

Pastor: What does this hope do?

Church: Everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies Himself as He is pure (1 John 3:3)

**Benediction:** 1 Thessalonians 3:12–13 [12] and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, [13] so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.