

Our Righteous Judge

[The Week that Changed the World – Matthew 25:31-46]

Opening

Some doors, like the front gate of the White House, are tough to walk through. The White House has one level of security after another, and you simply don't get in unless you are wanted, unless you have clearance, unless you have an appointment.

Some people do get into the White House based on who they are. Some get in based on who they know.

On Sunday July 26, 2009, one of the biggest and most famous men in the world—NBA star Shaquille O'Neil—tried to get into the White House *without an appointment*. At 7-1 and 325 pounds, with a winning smile, and NBA championship rings on his fingers from years of playing for the Los Angeles Lakers, Shaq has what it takes to walk into most places he wants to go. *Doors open for Shaq.*

And so, Shaq decided to put his celebrity, and President Obama's love of basketball, to the test. He was on a D.C. sports radio show and he put this question to the listeners: "**Check this out, I got on a nice suit, I'm in D.C. paying a visit, I jump out of a cab in front of the White House**, I don't use none of my political or law enforcement connections. If I go to the gate and say, 'Hey, I'm in town, I would like to see the President,' ***do I get in, or do I not get in?***"

Two days later, Shaq gave it a try, and just as Shaq has rejected those who would drive past him to the hoop, so the security guards at the White House gate rejected him.

Later that day, Shaq tweeted, "The White House wouldn't let me in, whyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy."

Did Shaq get in or not? No, because he had no appointment or invitation. Today we have the privilege of reading the final teaching/sermon of Jesus Christ in the gospel of Matthew. This last excursus is intriguing and difficult. It shows us that **entrance into the kingdom of God is found in Jesus Christ.**

Jesus provides a reminder that his **death** on the cross is our **invitation** into new life. It is a reminder that many will attempt to enter the kingdom of God based on who they know or what they have done. Truly this is a reminder and parable of gospel transformation. **Jesus is demonstrating how a grace shaped life looks.**

Scripture [Matthew 25:31-46]

Prayer

Big Idea: Jesus the King is my righteous Judge

Jesus is our righteous judge (Matt. 25:31-34)

Remember this is the last parable and extensive teaching that Jesus leaves his followers before his journey to the cross. The final parable contained in Matthew is a response on the Mt of Olives to the disciples question, “**tell us when these things will happen.**”

This is a parable of gospel transformation. Jesus is demonstrating how a life changed by grace looks. Jesus is saying: **boys, let me tell you about the kingdom.**

Jesus begins with a **glimpse at the kingdom**. We find in this parable (earthly stories with eternal truths) the Son of Man in his glory and the angels huddled up around a throne in heaven. **Who is sitting on the throne?** Not the angels. Not one angel is worthy to sit upon the throne of God. There is only one who is worthy to sit upon the throne and that is Jesus Christ.

John the Beloved disciple has a vision of heaven and he is struck with a horrible fear because he did not see anyone in heaven worthy! **Rev. 5:4 I wept and wept because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or even to look in it. 5 Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Look, the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered so that he is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.” There is ONE who is worthy and it is Jesus!**

Because only one is worthy to sit upon the throne only one is worthy and allowed to Judge. I am not your judge and you are not your judge. Listen to the power of the word of God. Not one **person who has ever lived is your judge or jury.** I cannot judge your salvation, because I am a horrible partial sinful arbiter. And you are not capable to judge me because you are partial and broken.

This also means that you cannot judge **yourself** because you are self-seeking and partial. **Have you ever noticed how others sins are always worse than your own?** Where does this come from? It is rooted in a desire to make yourself look **good and set yourself up as the judge and gatekeeper.**

Everyone is eagle-eyed to see another's faults and deformity. --John Dryden
You have a righteous and perfect judge. His name is Jesus!

Jesus, on His way to the cross, reminds that we can not live our lives by our standards. Very clearly the Savior is reminding us of the heavenly hierarchy. **The question is not if Jesus will judge, the answer is When.** The rule and judgement of Jesus Christ is all-encompassing. All the angels and all nations are gathered before Him. Hebrews reiterates this final scene in all of our lives, “It is appointed for people to die once – and after this judgment (9:27).” **There is nothing or no one who will not be held accountable to King Jesus.**

This is why sin is devastating. Sin ignoring the rule and design of the Lord in your life to know Him and make him know. And Jesus is saying: although no one else sees the way you live, I do! Ultimately our sin is against Jesus. It was King David who proclaimed against you and you only have I sinned.

Look what is not there in this beautiful scene? **No jury.** You will not have a highlight reel of your life with a cheering section or a jeering section. **No scales.** Jesus did not tell the disciples that He was going to weigh your life based upon the good or the bad which I have committed. Instead, all nations and will gathered and He alone will separate. **How?** Because man looks at the outside, but God looks at the heart.

The judge will be Christ. In other words, the one who judges us most **finally** will be the one who loves us most **fully**. –Frederick Beuchner

Don't lose focus: the intent of this parable is not to scare us to death concerning the judgement of the Lord. Rather, to see the majesty of the one who is worthy to sit upon the throne! You have a judge. He is righteous and He is worthy!

Jesus is our only hope (Matt. 25:33)

Why the spiritual life is often so difficult, is found here in this parable. **Currently, both sheep (those who follow Jesus Christ) and those who are rejecting the Savior (goats) are pasturing together.** I know what you are thinking. You are trying to figure out who is here is a goat and a sheep. One would think that it is easy to determine a sheep from a goat. **But this is a determination that only a perfect shepherd can make.** Today in this gathering are those who follow (sheep), and those who don't know Him (goats).

Over and over again we see the people of the Lord called his sheep. **As a shepherd looks for scattered sheep so I will look for my flock (Ezek 34:12).** Jesus rejoices when he finds the 1 lost sheep among the 99. The sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. The sheep follow him because they know his voice.

We do not find any sheep-goat hybrids around throne (called geeps or shoats). **In nature if this were to happen the offspring would not survive.** Jesus is reminding us that you cannot be both in and out of the kingdom. **Which are you?** And before you answer reminder that Jesus is the judge and the shepherd.

How is this hopeful at all? Jesus graciously shows us that we **become part of the kingdom of God due to a declaration, an invitation, and a preparation.** We find these magnificent words of Jesus: come you who are blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared.

What makes a sheep a sheep? Because the shepherd calls them, invites them, gives them inheritance, and prepares for them.

Because of Christ you can be declared His! Gal 3:26 ²⁶ for through faith you are all sons of God in Christ Jesus. How amazing to know that through the blood of the perfect lamb, you can be declared His (sheep). And the King will say to those on his right—**come**. Just as Shaq attempting to enter the Whitehouse on his own. You cannot enter the presence of the Lord unless you are **invited**.

This is the power of Easter. The sinless life of Christ, his substitutionary death on the cross, the power of the resurrection invites you to **come** inherit the kingdom! by faith alone, **come**. Jesus was preparing the hearts of those who were listening: His sinless life, his death on the cross, his victory over death on the third day is your invitation to the kingdom if you believe.

Because Jesus is the righteous judge He is Right to keep his promises. Because He is righteous he can now declare you righteous through His sacrifice! There are no geeps or shoats.

Jesus is our life (25:35)

The more you read the Bible the more you realize that it is reading you. Jesus turns now to those who he has invited into His kingdom and says: for I was hungry.... And the righteousness will answer back to him **when?** See, Jesus did not declare the sheep righteous because of what they did. **Rather, these people don't even realize they were serving King Jesus.** Righteous- Why are they righteous? Not because of their works. They are called righteous by Jesus.

Righteousness is declared not deserved.

It is as if a life in Christ is so transformational that those who follow Christ don't even realize they are serving Christ. When did we serve you Lord? This is the power of the gospel. ***The more you abide in Jesus the more you become like him. The more you see Jesus the less you see yourself.*** Righteous people supernaturally walk in paths of righteousness. Unrighteous people will naturally walk unrighteous paths. **Said another way, what I do is an outflow of what He did.**

Jesus is also teaching us a deeper truth: *It is not as much that the sheep recognized Christ in the least of these. Rather, they recognize themselves in the least of these. Recognition that you are least is the antidote to our self-love, self-righteousness, and self-help.*

But... To the goats he will say (25:41): Depart into the everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels?—Not originally for you: you are intruders into everlasting fire. —Wesley

Hell is prepared for the devil and demons from the foundation of the world. We **choose hell** and eternal separation it is not prepared for you.

And in spite of all our rebellion – Jesus invites us to know Him and have life. To surrender.

Call

I wonder today if Jesus would say something like this to us:

Remember that single mom in need

Remember that person in jail. The person who was a murder and everyone turned their back on them.

Remember that person who smelled like liquor who walked in to Sunday worship. No one wanted to sit by him. But I saw you when you got up and sat next to him.

Truly I say to you... as you did it to the least of these, you did unto me.

Salvation is this: a recognition that I am the least of these! And that I am in desperate need of His Grace every day and every moment.

Some people do get into the White House based on who they are. Some get in based on who they know. The kingdom of God is invitation only, and you invited. Will you accept by faith alone His invitation of Grace today?

One day we will all stand before the glorious throne. Jesus reminds us in His holy word that sin is a departure (depart from me), but grace is an invitation (come).

16 For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Notes

A saving faith is always revealed by a serving faith

This is the Messiah's answer to the disciples question in Matthew 24:3, "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what is the sign of your coming of the end of the age.?"

This is a parable of gospel transformation. Jesus is demonstrating how a life changed by grace looks.

Important Words

All (v. 31 and 32)

The answer of both the sheep and the goats is basically the same (39 and 44).

Come – I can only come to the father by invitation

When- 25:31, 38, 39, vs. Then

You are divided not by what you do but by what you are

Matt. 25:31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. **32** All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. **33** He will put the sheep on his right and 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.

There is only one who is worthy to sit upon the throne and His name is Jesus Christ.

The throne is a place of power, status, authority, and reign. [Rev. 5:4](#) I wept and wept because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or even to look in it. [5](#) Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Look, the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered so that he is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

Because only one is worthy to sit upon the throne only one is worthy and allowed to Judge. I am not your judge and you are not your judge.

Because someone sits upon the throne we will all be judged. [Heb. 9:27](#) ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for people to die once—and after this, judgment

The judge will be Christ. In other words, the one who judges us most finally will be the one who loves us most fully. —Frederick Beuchner

32. All the nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη). The whole human race; though the word is generally employed in the New Testament to denote *Gentiles* as distinguished from Jews.

Separate **them** (αὐτούς). Masculine, while the word *nations* is neuter. Nations are regarded as gathered *collectively*; but in contemplating the act of separation the Lord regards the *individuals*.

The sheep from the goats (or *kids*, so Rev. in margin). “The bald division of men into sheep and goats is, in one sense, so easy as not to be worth performing; and in another sense it is so hard as only to be possible for something with supernatural insight” (John Morley, “Voltaire”). Goats are an appropriate figure, because the goat was regarded as a comparatively worthless animal. Hence the point of the elder son’s complaint in the parable of the Prodigal: *Not so much as a kid* (Luke 15:29). The diminutive (ἐρίφια) expresses contempt.

33. Goats (ἐρίφια). Diminutive. Lit., *kidlings*. The sheep and goats are represented as having previously pastured together. Compare the parables of the Tares and the Net.

On the right (ἐκ δεξιῶν). Lit., *from* the right side or parts. The picture to the Greek reader is that of a row, beginning at the judge’s right hand.

Inherit the kingdom—Purchased by my blood, for all who have believed in me with the faith which wrought by love. —Wesley

James 2:10 For whoever keeps the entire law, and yet stumbles at one point, is guilty of breaking it all.

Matt. 25:35 “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 took me in; **36** I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me; I was in prison and you visited me.’

It is not as much that the sheep recognized Christ in the least of these. Rather, they recognize themselves in the least of these. Recognition that you are least is the antidote to our self-love, self-righteousness, and self-help.

Matt. 25:37 “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** When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or without clothes and clothe you? **39** When did we see you sick, or in prison, and visit you?’

Righteous- Why are they righteous? Not because of their works. They are called righteous by Jesus. Righteousness is **declared not deserved**.

Righteous people supernaturally walk in paths of righteousness. Unrighteous people will naturally walk unrighteous paths. Said another way, what I do is an outflow of what He did.

Your life demonstrates your love.

James 2:14 echoes similar language. **James 2:14** What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can such faith save him? Faith is not claimed. It is a conviction lived out.

Matt. 25:40 “And the King will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Matt. 25:41 “Then he will also say to those on the left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire 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 didn’t take me in; I was naked and you didn’t clothe me, sick and in prison and you didn’t take care of me.’

Depart into the everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels?—Not originally for you: you are intruders into everlasting fire. —Wesley

Hell is prepared for the devil and demons from the foundation of the world. We choose hell and eternal separation it is not prepared for you.

Matt. 25:44 “Then they too will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help you?’

Then will they answer—So the endeavour to justify themselves, will remain with the wicked even to that day! —Wesley

Matt. 25:45 “Then he will answer them, ‘I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

Matt. 25:46 “And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

46. *And these, etc.* These *persons*. Many, holding the doctrine of universal salvation, have contended that God would punish *sin* only. Christ says that those on his left hand shall go away—not *sins*, but *sinners*. Besides, *sin*, as an abstract thing, cannot be punished. It is nothing but the acts of transgressors; and to be reached at all, must be reached by punishing the offenders.

Into everlasting punishment. The original word, here translated *punishment*, means torment, or suffering inflicted for crime. The noun is used but in one other place in the New Testament,

Illustrations

Application
