

LESSONS FROM HEAVEN FOR LIFE ON EARTH- The Parables - Pt 4

Sunday, July 18th, 2021, 6:30 p.m. - Teaching # 2122

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WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMES IN HIS GLORY

Matthew 25:31-46 - "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."

Strictly speaking, this passage doesn't belong in a series of studies on the parables of Jesus. The only parabolic imagery is the reference to the shepherd with his sheep and goats in verses 32 and 33. The reason we're studying this account today is ***it sums up the message of the preceding parables of judgement.*** Here we have an account, from the mind of Jesus, of what will actually take place when He comes again to judge the world.

Because it is not, for the most part, a ***parable***, but an ***account***, it is not ***something like*** what will happen when Jesus comes. It is ***exactly what will happen when Jesus comes back.*** This is what Jesus wants to tell us about His Second Coming in the ***final story of His public ministry.*** This is the last public lesson He gave.

1) **IN JESUS' VISION OF THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD, THERE IS COMING A GREAT FORK IN THE ROAD**

Matthew 25:31-33 - "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."

This will be such a huge, public, and spectacular event that the only word to picture it is the one Jesus Himself chooses - and He uses twice - “**glorious**”(31). The Son of Man will come in His **glory**. He will sit on His **glorious** throne. Everybody will be standing with their mouths open. The Bible says every mouth will be stopped. I take that to mean people will be totally **stunned - speechless**. The event will knock the whole world to its knees.

The text says there will be a **gathering** and a **separating**. “**Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another** ”(32). Some will go to the **right**, and some will go to the **left**. Very simply, the crowd will not all **stay together**. They won’t all go to the **same** place. Nor will they receive the **same** treatment. What ever else is tricky in this passage, surely that much is crystal clear.

It really makes no difference how many authors of “near death” experiences write about going through a tunnel and heading toward a bright light. It makes no difference that in most of those books everyone goes to the **same** place and has the **same** experience. I don’t care how many **angels of light** come up with different stories, or how popular their teaching becomes. Here’s what **Jesus** said. There will be a great **separation** - a great **division** - when He comes to judge the world.

This is something we must never forget. Here, and for now, people can lose themselves in a crowd that is much like themselves. There is no **pressure** to act - no reason to change - and no threat of penalty if they don't.

But Jesus says, on **that** day, it will all be so different. There will be immense public **reward**, or immense public **shame**. Nothing will be done **discreetly**. All the **nations** will be gathered (32). Somehow, **nations** will be sifted right down to **individuals**. The text seems to indicate quite simply that Jesus will **talk to each person individually**. And the text says He will send each one either to His right or to His left.

We are so used to the **freedom to choose** that we presently possess. We can choose to live for the Lord. We can choose to live for ourselves. We are free to choose how passionate and how devoted we will be to Christ and His cause. We can choose to live with areas of compromise. We can choose our own level of involvement or uninvolvement in Christ's church. The opportunity to **choose and set our own course** is so limitless.

Then Jesus tells of a coming time when all of that freedom comes to a jolting, crashing end. There will be a separating that will set eternal destiny. That separation will be decided **for** us. All our decision making will come to an end. Jesus will choose. It will all be out of our hands.

Cut it anyway you like. Jesus cautioned us about ***forgetting*** this, or ***pretending*** it wouldn't actually happen. We're to ponder this carefully. Remember, these are some of His very last words.

2) **JUDGEMENT WILL BE BASED ON OUR ACTIONS, RATHER THAN OUR BELIEFS**

This is surprising to many. That why Jesus repeated this truth two times for emphasis:

Matthew 25:34-36 - “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.’”

Then, again:

Matthew 25:41-43 - “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.’”

There is no escaping Jesus' point. Separation is determined on the basis of what people **do**, or what they **don't do**. They were never asked about their **beliefs**. All that was assessed was their **deeds**.

This raises some very important questions. **Does it matter what we believe?** What about verses like, “**Except you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.**” Or, “**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.**” **Are people saved by faith or by works?** And if they aren't **saved** by works, how can they be **judged** by works?

For many Christians the issue raised by these words from Jesus is only one more reminder of a thorny theological issue. Some Christians feel the Bible gives two messages at the same time. Here, in today's text, Jesus says He will separate and judge the world by the things they do or do not do. But in other places He says, “Come unto me all you who labor and I will **give** you rest.”

In John 3:16 Jesus says “**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.**” Then, in John 5:28-29 He says, “**Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice [29] and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.**”

Or consider the teaching of the Apostle Paul. Paul is noted for his defense of the great doctrine of justification by faith alone. In Ephesians 2:8-9 Paul says, “**For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**” But in 2 Corinthians 5:10 Paul says this: “**For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.**”

Jesus and Paul are not contradicting themselves. The problem is in our *understanding* of their words. We *are* saved by grace. We are *not* saved by works. But if we are not *saved* by works, why are we *judged* by works? And the whole Bible gives the same unified answer to that question. **Works are the only possible result of grace received.** I am not *saved* by works. But my profession of salvation can never be *unaccompanied by works.*

"Well, I thought we were saved by grace alone!"

We **are**. We are saved by grace **alone**. But what does God's grace **do** when it enters my life?

Titus 2:11-14 - "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12] training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, [13] waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, [14] who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."

Here's the problem. We are so naturally inclined to think of works as the **opposite** of grace. And they **are**, if I am using my own righteousness to earn God's satisfaction **apart from the atoning death of Jesus Christ for my sins.**

But for those who **profess** salvation **through faith in Jesus Christ**, works are not the **opposite** of grace. Works are the necessary, natural **fruit** of God's grace in our lives. In fact, **there is no such thing as receiving God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ without the accompanying zeal for good deeds being manifested in my life.** The record of the New Testament is clear. If that zeal for good works isn't present, I'm not saved. It's just that simple.

Contrary to popular opinion, as far as I know, there is nothing in the New Testament to indicate that on judgement day Jesus will ask me if I **acknowledged** Him as my Savior and Lord. He won't **have** to. He'll **know** if I've received saving grace by examining the **fruit** of it in my life.

That's why Jesus says He will look at the works of the people. He will assess the reality of their **faith** on that basis. Their righteous deeds don't undo the foundation of free grace in their lives. Notice the key words 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.'**"

These blessed people didn't **earn** the kingdom with their righteous deeds. The kingdom was **passed on freely** - like any **inheritance**. Their righteous deeds only **demonstrated** that they were, in fact, the **Father's children** ("....**you who are blessed by my Father**" 34). They were recipients of free, adopting, divine life and grace.

3) **IN THIS ACCOUNT, THE PART OF THE LIFE RECEIVING DIVINE ATTENTION WASN'T THE PART WE PERCEIVE AS THE 'RELIGIOUS' PART**

Both with those being **rewarded** and those being **judged**, attention was focused on things so small, neither crowd **remembered** them. They weren't examined by the things they said or did in the sanctuary. No chart was produced of their offerings over the years. They weren't tested on whether or not they could recite the books of the Bible. They were not asked whether or not they sang in the choir.

Aren't those things important? Yes, they're **very** important. Don't they count for eternity? Yes they **do** count for eternity. Then why does Jesus pick these obscure, forgotten, unnoticed acts performed by saints who weren't even thinking about them?

That very question hits the nail on the head. ***It's the unguarded moments - the action done when no one else notices - the righteousness that sustains its own life outside church walls - that shows the authenticity of what's truly in my heart.***

It's the ***unstudied*** part of my life that reveals the Lordship of Jesus. That's where the life of the kingdom shines most brightly. ***That's the part of my life that shows if what's happening in the sanctuary is really changing my life, or if it's all a religious performance.*** Jesus looks at the way I live the part of my life I think is on my own time.

So this account from the lips of Jesus is very important. It not only ends the chapter, it sums up the teaching of the previous parables of judgement. It's not enough that at one time in the distant past, my lamp of devotion to Jesus was burning brightly. It has to be ***maintained.*** It must be burning just as brightly the day the King comes back as when He first came into my heart. That's the lesson of the parable of the ten bridesmaids.

It's not enough that I was graciously given talents by the Master. It's not enough that I ***received,*** at some time in the past, something from His hand. He's looking for ***faithful stewardship.*** I must work hard in His service ***until He comes back.*** That's the lesson of the parable of the servants who work with their master's talents.

And then, after the story telling is over, Jesus tells us clearly and plainly that He's going to judge **all** our lives. And people will be separated, sheep from goats. And the separation won't just be between those who **profess** Him and those who don't. ***There will be surprises.*** People will discover Jesus watched their lives ***more closely than they imagined.*** He remembered things they long forgot.

It's like staying in a hotel. Eighty dollars a night - four nights - that's \$320. But your bill is closer to \$425. O yes, forgot about **tax**. Then, as you look at it closely, you see those phone calls you forgot about. Then there were those evenings when you felt you had to have some cake and ice cream in the coffee shop. Then there was that morning you ordered toast and coffee up to your room. And those faxes you sent weren't free either. ***The hotel desk remembers everything.***

That's what Jesus said it will be like on judgement day. And there's a lesson here. There is a tremendous advantage in confessing Jesus Christ as Lord in a way that's **refreshed** every day. There's great wisdom in allowing all sin to sting your heart into immediate repentance. There's great help in doing what the Spirit prompts you to do for the Lord quickly.

"This teaching seems so scary, Pastor Don. What if I can't even **remember** all the things I should have brought to the Lord long ago? What chance do I have when Jesus comes to judge?"

The Bible answers that question:

1 John 1:9 - “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Stay close to Jesus every day. Always respond while your heart is mindful and alert. Hiding sin is deadly. Forgetting about it can cost you your soul. But if you confess it now and forsake it completely Jesus will clean more of your life than you imagined. He looks at your ***desire to be clean***. He will cleanse you from ***all*** unrighteousness.