☩ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. ☩

The parable is a warning for the church. Faith without works is dead. If you claim to love God and yet hate your brother, then you will be exposed and will be sent to everlasting punishment. Jesus will say to all of the unbelievers, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 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 take me in, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." For inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did it not to me. Those who refuse God's grace will be judged by their works and damned.

On the other hand, those who live by God's grace, by faith, who trust in God's mercy and Christ to save them, do good works. They do them, but they do not trust in them to save them. They trust in Christ alone to save them. His mercy then moves them to similar compassion, informed and conformed by his grace, they are inspired to serve those for whom Jesus died. This is why Jesus says to the chosen righteous, come you blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you took me in. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me.

In a way that is not completely distinct from the unbelievers, the believers, the righteous also protest, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or naked and clothe you? Or when did we see you sick or in prison and come to you?" They are happy to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, but they know that it is a kingdom of grace. It is inherited by faith, they reject the idea that they works, as good as they may be might have contributed or earned for them even the smallest corner of heaven. They know it cannot be earned by works. For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

And yet we are the workmanship of God. We have been created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Without works, faith is dead. We

were created not merely to be saved or to live, but we were created to live for God in good works. True faith thus lives out in works of service to the brothers of Jesus. It reflects and it extends the mercy of Christ. The world knows us by our love. And yet faith does not trust in works. It cannot, because we are not saved by works, not of works, lest any man should boast.

At the last judgment, Christ does not point to the works of the righteous as meriting the inheritance that he gives, but rather he points to the works of his children as proof that they are in fact his children, that they have been restored to his image, that they look and they act like he does. It seems a bit unusual, but when Jesus brings up these works, even there at the judgment, it actually serves in a sense to expose again the need for forgiveness and grace. Saint Paul writes, for by works of the law, no human will be justified in God's sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. And thus do the righteous protest, "What have we done to earn an inheritance?" Nothing. But the king answers, assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.

What the Father did to the Son on the cross, He did unto us. Jesus is our substitute who stood in our place. Just as the son was condemned and bore the penalty for all the sins of the world, we ourselves have borne it and are free, and there is no condemnation. Now, named with His name and washed in His blood, blessed with his father's blessing, we stand in His place. We are his and he is with us. And therefore, whatever is done unto us by our brothers, or we do unto them in his name, is in fact done unto him. Come you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

☩ In Jesus Name. Amen. ☩