Last Sunday in the Church Year
"The final separation – it's personal!"
Matthew 25:31-36
November 22, 2026
Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this Last Sunday in the Church Year is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 25:31-36.

"31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of 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 took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'"

So far our text:

On this last Sunday of the church year our Gospel reading from Matthew is the last of three parables that Jesus tells of the final judgement. It is a judgement, not a trial. For the judge is the Son of Man, the glorified Son of Man, Jesus, who sits on His throne of glory He knows all men's hearts – personally. And every man woman and child will be present on this final judgement day – no exceptions. No one will be late for this day for all will be gathered. You and I will be present on this last day. What is most important, eternally important is where you will be set in relation to the Son of Man…on His right hand or on His left hand.

Our entire lives on this earth whether they be 70 years or 80 if by reason of strength as we heard last week in Psalm 90…our entire lives are judged by Jesus and He separates all people into two groups…sheep or goats – blessed eternally or cursed eternally!

Because this day is so momentous, with such eternal consequences, each of us should strive to make sure we are on the right and not the left. This is not a day to take lightly, casually or flippantly.

To be on the Son of Man's right hand on that last day is to know Him as your King, the King of your life right now. To those on Jesus right hand, He speaks to them as their King. **"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:"**

And how did the Son of Man prepare the kingdom of heaven? St. Paul tells us in Philippians 2:

"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Confess Jesus, Christ Crucified, as your King and you are blessed not cursed. For Jesus is the blessed One who comes in the name of the Lord. Those who confess His name praise Him saying, **""Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' The King of Israel!"**

Romans 10 tells us what those who confess Jesus as Lord receive now and on the last day.

"that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

It's personal. It's personal for each person to repent of one's sins and confess Jesus as your Lord. And you will not be put to shame on that last judgment day.

Oh, the sheep are not perfect. They are sinners just like the goats. Yet, they believe in the Savior Jesus unto righteousness, while the goats reject the Jesus, trample His good gifts of salvation under foot and remain in their sins. There is no personal relationship with Jesus a Lord. He is not their King.

The sheep are not flippant about their souls, but remember all God's benefits as Psalm 103 tells us:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!
2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:
3 Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases,
4 Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,"

The sheep know their King Jesus personally as a merciful and loving King as Psalm 103 goes on to say:

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy
9 He will not always strive with us,Nor will He keep His anger forever.
10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities.11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; 12 As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us."

And on that last day of judgment, there is no recitation of sins that the sheep committed. For they are removed, by Jesus the King Himself…by His death on the cross.

And confessing Jesus with your tongue that He is your Lord unites makes you one with your King. You are united with Him through faith in Him. His blessedness, His righteousness is yours through faith.

But to those on His left hand, the goats, Jesus is not their King, and He doesn't speak to them as their King for they will not enter His Kingdom of Heaven. These are the words that Jesus speaks to those on His left:

“Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:”

The goats had no relationship with the King. They had no oil in their lamps. He did not know them as they pound at the closed door to the wedding feast. They buried the talents that the master gave them for they did not mean anything to them. They were buried and dead to them. And now, on the last day, the evidence of this comes to light. And the goats are dead to Jesus – eternally…cast into the everlasting fire of torment forever.

The sheep are commended as being good and faithful to the least of the King’s brethren. And when one shows love in the smallest of acts of mercy to another, one shows it to Jesus Himself. There is a personal relationship with Jesus that makes all the sheep’s works connected directly to Jesus.

The sheep are not saved by their works. It’s the evidence that they are saved by the work of Jesus alone! The sheep’s good works are not the cause of their salvation, but the evidence that they are saved by Jesus and show forth the fruit of their salvation.

St. Paul tells us in Galatians 3:

“5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?— 6 just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” 7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.”

The just shall live by faith. The sheep have Jesus righteousness counted toward them and that makes them just and righteous and blessed. Blessed eternally. Thanks be to Jesus!

So Paul tells the us then:
“11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.”

As we wait for this final judgement day, God's people, the sheep, those blessed by God through faith in Jesus, keep and guard this faith, this treasure with utmost endurance. As Paul urges the sheep to do:

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

It is God's working in you, right now in your personal relationship to your King, Jesus, to do His will, His good pleasure, and on the last day hear His beautiful words:

'Come, you blessed of 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 took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

Amen

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Amen. (Philippians 4:7)