

Last Sunday of the Church Year
November 22, 2020

“No Recounts!!” (Matthew 25:32-34)
By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our coming King! Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, fellow servants in Christ,
Today’s text for this last Sunday of the church year is from our Gospel reading,
Matthew 25:32-34.

“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. 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. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 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:’”

Here ends our text.

Here we are... once again. It’s the last Sunday of the church year. How quickly a year has passed by again. Maybe with all the sickness that has filled this year, it couldn’t come quick enough. Well, on the bright side, we’re one year closer to the coming of the Son of Man than we were before! And that’s how our Gospel reading for today begins...with the word “When”.

It’s a time word, isn’t it? There will come a future time when the Son of Man comes in His glory. I didn’t see the word “if” there, did you? Our Gospel didn’t say, “If the Son of Man comes in His glory, but when He does. Of course, our human perspective of time is so limited compared to our eternal God. For as Scripture reminds us, in 2 Peter 3,

**“beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”
(2 Peter 3:8-9)**

Time is not irrelevant to God. On the contrary, He is purposefully providing as much time as possible before the big “When” happens. He’s longsuffering because He wants all to repent before the big separation happens. Yes, as much as God doesn’t want anyone to perish, there will be people on the left, the goats who rejected the call to faith.

Our Gospel reminds us today that there will be a public judgment day of all people. When that day will be, no one knows. But, again, it is a “when” not an “if”.

The big picture that our Gospel text describes is that the preparations for this day, that is, the making of the eternal inheritance of heaven itself, was made **“for you from the foundation of the world”**. Don’t let those two words “for you” slip by you without grasping them in comfort. God, in His infinite view of time already prepared your eternal inheritance for you, thousands of years before you were born! And this day of your entrance into your eternal inheritance has also been planned for you. It’s a “when”, not an “if”.

Scripture tells us when heaven was created for you. But it doesn’t tell us the day of judgment when you will physically enter it as His sheep.

We don’t have to worry about the “when”. We continue **“to run with endurance the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”** (Hebrews 12:1-2)

So, Peter says in his first epistle how we are to run this race. **“giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”**

Today, Jesus gives us much to understand about what will happen on judgement day. He does so, that we may be ever more diligent in making sure we are on the right as His sheep, and not on the left as goats.

There are three main actions that take place on judgement day. First, all the nations will be gathered for this public hearing, and there will be no recounts.

Second, those on the King's right hand will hear the command to come and inherit the kingdom of heaven, because there is no fraud or irregularity found in the righteous sheep.

And thirdly, those cursed goats on the left will be told to depart into eternal fire, and there will be no runoffs.

I. No recounts for all the nations

First, judgement day begins with the coming of the Son of Man in His glory, with all the angels and a complete gathering of all people of all the nations before Him. What a sight that will be! Of course, the devil and all the evil angels are not present because they are already in the everlasting fire of hell. No one will escape this last day of judgement. There will be no one taking a sick day or on vacation. Every man, woman and child ever born will be present and divided into two groups.

This seems to us like a monumental task. Just trying to count all the legal votes in this presidential election is again proving to be a daunting task full of human, and it appears, machine manipulation, and software glitches. Thousands of votes were just discovered in Georgia that were not counted. Then there are affidavits from people who witnessed the shredding of ballots and the manufacturing of ballots. Will the recounts be accurate or just a close approximation? Such is the struggle our nation is going through in our time and place.

But, we can be absolutely sure that Jesus will correctly divide the nations into the sheep and goats. There won't be any need for a recount. Jesus won't stop the judgement hearing and say, "Oh, you over there on my left, you're supposed to be on my right hand."

Jesus won't make any mistakes. His verdict is final. There will be no appeals or need to sway the court of public opinion. For all the public will be present and hear the verdict. Each soul will hear Jesus say either of these two words, "Come" or "Depart". It will be that simple. For Jesus knows the hearts of all people. He knows who they voted for. He knows who each person believed, confessed, and served. This is the demarcation day for all eternity. From this day, there will be one group

who receives eternal life, and one who receives eternal punishment. And Jesus' certification is final. No recounts.

II. No fraud or irregularities found in the righteous sheep

Who does Jesus first judge and certify? His own...the sheep of His pasture. The believers in Jesus will not have to wait to hear the good news spoken from their King. Notice that the Jesus is not called King to the goats, for a King requires loyal believing subjects. And none are found among the goats. He has no relationship with them.

So, the sheep hear right away a joyful invitation to inherit and receive the kingdom prepared for them, again, since the foundation of the world. They are called blessed of the Father, blessed by the Father. For in this life the sheep knew Jesus' Father as their dear Father who blessed them with faith, and all that was needed for their bodies and souls. For that very reason, they are also called "the righteous". The sheep have the righteousness of Jesus through faith. **"The just will live by faith". (Romans 1:17)**

So also, **Philippians 3:9** tells of the righteousness the sheep received from God by faith. Paul personally describes this new life in Christ. **"and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith"**

So, it should not surprise us, that on the judgement day there is no record read of the sins that the sheep committed. Why? Because there IS no record. It doesn't exist. There is no fraud. There are no irregularities to be found in the sheep. They are righteous, not just called righteous. No fraud in our present presidential election? No ballot harvesting? No, that's not possible in this sinful world.

But there is nothing to hide from all who are observing on judgement day. There is nothing done in secret, blocking any windows. Jesus is quick to supply the evidence of the living faith of the sheep. It is not what saved them, of course. For Jesus death and resurrection alone saved the world. What Jesus does, however, is provide the evidence of the faith of the sheep, that His gift of salvation was not rejected but believed. Jesus describes their new lives led by the Holy Spirit.

“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.’

But, when did we do these things to You, the sheep ask Jesus? There is that word “when” again. In that period of time that the sheep were living there was a “when” of fruitful living. There was a gaining of talents, as we heard last week. There was supplying of oil faith to the lamps of the virgins that we heard two weeks ago. Christians lived their lives in faith, and Jesus tells all the world, on judgement day, that when they did it to the least of these they did it to Him. **‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’**

Their acts of love did not go unnoticed by Jesus for they were done in faithful service to Him. Loving Jesus’ brethren is loving Jesus, for the body of Christ is one with Jesus at its head! Though the sheep, you and I included have not lived perfect lives, there is no accusation of any sins of omission. For they are made perfect in Jesus, their Shepherd. So, Paul says in Colossians 1.

“the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”

No fraud, no irregularities, only perfection -in Jesus!

III. No runoffs for the cursed goats

Whereas the sheep heard not a single word of wrongdoing, and not a single sin was listed, not so with the goats. Their sins are on full display as evidence of their unrighteousness. The goats stand on their own without the righteousness of Christ to cover them. Their stain filled lives are detestable in Jesus’ eyes. They must depart from His sight and go where all the cursed go...to everlasting punishment in the eternal fire.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us why they could never stand without condemnation. **“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”**

But when did we see You and not give you food or drink or visit you, comes the cry of the cursed? When? Where there was no faith in Jesus, there was no “when”. There was no living for Jesus in loving His brethren.

And again, Jesus’ word is final. He certifies their eternal fate with the order to depart from His presence. There are no words of reconciliation or second chances. That time has passed. There are no runoffs. There is now only eternal punishment that never ends.

And that is a sobering thought to the sheep, to you and I,...to remain diligent, to watch, and remain faithful unto death to receive the crown of life. (Revelation 2:10)

Recounts, fraud, irregularities and runoffs. These are the things of this present world to try to get the elections right to the best of our abilities. We never will. But there is no need to worry that God will make a mistake on judgement day. We can be assured of that! He chose His sheep, elected them, predestined and called them as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself. He’s done it all for His sheep. Jesus has gained our inheritance by His death and resurrection! Heaven is prepared. We’re just waiting for the “when”, for the trumpet sound! We’re waiting and serving the least of our brethren in love for all that Jesus has done for us!

Listen to the beautiful words of the big picture of “time” that Paul proclaims to all believers as he opens his epistle to the Ephesians.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:3-6)

No recounts. Judgement day will be a quick procedural “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. No recounts...just refreshing eternal rest and joy as resurrected righteous sheep of the Lamb. Amen.

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

