

Kingdom Sheep

Matthew 25:35-46

Matthew 25:31-46 (NASB)

“But 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 from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and 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 of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 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 invited Me in; 36 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, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? 38 And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ 40 The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’

41 “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been 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 did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ 44 Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ 45 Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ 46 These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Jesus had been followed by His disciples for 3 years and it's only 3 days to the cross.

Jesus had been **FIXED** on going to Jerusalem and the inevitability of the horrors of the cross.

Jesus took a **LONG VIEW** of the cross:

Matthew 25:31 (NASB)

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

Jesus knows it's just 3 days until He goes to the cross...

He wants to equip His disciples to wait expectantly for him to return.

Let's start where Jesus starts:

Matthew 25:31 (NASB)

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

Notice it doesn't say "IF the son of man comes..." it says **WHEN**

So Jesus is **ACTUALLY** coming back...and it's going to be **AMAZING**.

He is coming back "IN HIS GLORY!"

Revelation 19:11-16 (NASB)

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

Jesus WILL come—and on THAT day, nobody will question his authority.

Jesus comes and He sits on His glorious throne and He judges the whole world in righteousness.

Matthew 25:32-33 (NASB)

All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

Everyone will appear before the king

- **And the king then separates the people as a shepherd separates sheep from goats.**

Then the King puts the sheep on his right—this is a place of authority.

- Kings symbolically ruled with their right hand.

And then the king puts the goats on his left.

- So the king is placing the sheep on his right to rule with him, and he places the goats on his left.

Jesus then is saying that we are to love “the least of these.”—The LEAST.

- Not my “second favorite” person.
- Not “that guy I like but never talk to”

Jesus is referring to people who are so complicated & hard to love that nobody loves them.

These words of Jesus can cause real fear in our hearts...

- Loving the “least” requires complete self-abandonment.
- It’s NOT FUN to love “the least”...at all.

Matthew 25:35 (NASB)

34 “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’

Jesus is setting a foundation for the rest of this parable.—He is laying a foundation of grace.

- **But this is an uncomfortable grace...**

I’m initially uncomfortable that a holy God would want to pursue **me** & know **me** and indwell **me**.

In light of what I know about me, it is uncomfortable to think that God wants me near him.

- **And it’s a crazy invitation—God LITERALLY had to sacrifice his son to bring me near.**

This is an uncomfortable grace:

- It requires our willingness to let God move in and deal with our stuff.
- It requires our willingness to let God fix us.

And this grace is a GIFT—it is based on NOTHING that is in us.

- We must receive this gift...

But this grace is based 100% on the heart of the father.

So this text begins with:

- The glory of Christ coming as glorious king
 - And the father giving the kingdom to those whom he would call “blessed”
- THAT is what this passage is—it is God seeking and saving LOST PEOPLE.

****AND**, that God empowers & commissions us in His Kingdom work.

I believe the Apostle Paul discovered this reality and he sat in it and marinated in it.

- Paul knew himself and his past, but he also deeply knew God and God’s love.

I believe it was Paul’s deep understanding of God’s gift of grace that we see in:

Ephesians 2:8-10 (NASB)

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

WORKMANSHIP = “Poema” or POEM in Greek

“...the King says, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”

So we start with a foundation of grace and now jump into the hard details of the rest of the text.

- Like Paul, we want to sit in that tension that God has called us to.

We need to be aware of 2 possible errors relating to the ROLE OF WORKS:

A. Error #1—Our salvation depends upon what we do.

- Some take this passage to mean that ULTIMATELY, salvation is all about what we do.
- Some say, “yes, God’s grace is great and free and wonderful...”
- But God is only going to save those who straighten up, clean up their act and get it together.
- Get on God’s program and you’ll be saved...

NO! Vs 34 is a guardrail keeping us from concluding that salvation comes by our effort/works.

- Matthew 25:34 (NASB) ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.
- This invitation into the kingdom is NOT predicated upon our good deeds.

B. Error #2—Grace means that how we live doesn’t matter.

- **Others take this text to mean that it doesn’t really matter what we do.**
- We must be very careful to not fall into thinking that we can just check a box with a prayer and then live our lives independently from the Kingdom of heaven!
- We cannot intellectualize this passage—the things we do are CLEARLY of eternal significance.
- You would have to perform theological ju jitsu and contortions to come to the conclusion that what you do doesn’t matter.
- If you are a sheep (and not a goat), you will do what sheep do!
- Kingdom sheep do kingdom things.

Let's compare the King's initial address to each group:

The King speaks these words to the SHEEP:

Matthew 25:34-36 (NASB)

34 "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are 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 something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; 36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'

Now let's skip ahead and see how the king addresses the goats:

Matthew 25:41-43

41 "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been 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 did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.'

"hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, incarcerated..."

- **Jesus is outlining Kingdom work—these are the things that Kingdom sheep do.**
- Jesus says 2 things: "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you" or "depart from me into eternal fire."
- Jesus is saying that the goats are going to hell.

THAT is some serious tension for us to feel today.

- Jesus' wording SEEMS like his judgment is based on whether or not the flock did these things.
 - THAT'S HEAVY!
- Like, they either did these things or they didn't.

We'll get into a more complete explanation of Jesus' words in a few minutes, but first, let's consider this Kingdom work to which Jesus refers:

We can say 3 things about this:

1. We have a real responsibility to be about Kingdom things!

- To feed the hungry, to refresh the thirsty, to welcome the stranger, to clothe the naked, to care for the sick and to visit the incarcerated...
- Jesus makes it VERY clear that these things are important and we ought to give them attention.

2. These are good and true Kingdom things—they are not simply problems to solve.

- These problems have been around ever since sin entered the world.
 - Since that time we have tried to politicize or monetize these issues.
 - We tend to want to distance ourselves from them so we can focus on other things.
 - We want our government or our churches or our youth to be involved...
 - But adults need to be able to focus on "higher callings" and giftedness...

It is good for us to remember that Jesus specifically mentioned and emphasized these things.

- We all want to see a world with no hunger or suffering or lonely or sick or imprisoned people...
- Jesus is saying that we should be about bringing the Kingdom of heaven to the LEAST of these...

It is GOOD for us and GOOD for the Kingdom for us to see these things as beautiful.

Some of us may need to get out of our own heads and see the beauty of God's commandments.

- These are good and right and beautiful things that Jesus is calling us to!

3. In some way every one of these acts is an act of fidelity to Jesus.

- "You did this to ME, you gave ME water, you fed ME, you visited ME..."
- For the sheep, in a real way, every one of these benevolent acts is done TO Jesus or FOR Jesus.
 - These are acts of WORSHIP as much as acts of benevolence.

There are 2 surprises in this passage.

- Both the sheep and the goats are surprised and respond to the master.

Matthew 25:37-40 (NASB)

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 And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'

The sheep are surprised that the King is saying these things...

- WHEN DID WE DO THIS??
- There is a REAL surprise there.

Sheep are identified by who they follow.

- Since I am a kingdom resident, I do kingdom things
 - **As a follower of Jesus, that is WHO I AM.**
 - **A sheep can't help but to follow their shepherd.**

The sheep had never looked to these good deeds for salvation—they just follow Jesus and do them.

- Kingdom sheep serve the "least" among us, because that's who we are & WHAT WE DO.

We serve from a place of thankful humility.

This is seen explicitly in Psalm 51:

Psalm 51:16-17 (NASB)

For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it;

You are not pleased with burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;

A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

With that in mind, let's contrast the surprised Kingdom sheep now with the surprised goats:

Matthew 25:44-46

44 Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' 45 Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'

The goats are surprised by the SAME thing...but for a different reason.

They ask "WHAT?? When did we see YOU suffering like that?"

What they are communicating is a willingness to bless the king for a reward... but also an unwillingness to bless others who offer no hope of reward.

**The goats are only willing to obey when there is a clear benefit or reward.
The Kingdom sheep obey because their heart has been changed by Jesus.**

- BOTH are surprised to learn that the King is served by their service to the “least”.
- But they are surprised for very different reasons.

Both the sheep and the goats reveal the same truth about the value of our actions:

- **Our actions over time will ALWAYS reveal or betray our heart.**
- **Our actions over time will show what we really, truly believe.**
- **Our true heart and beliefs are evident by our actions.**

We cannot see salvation come to earth unless we have been saved ourselves.

These wonderful acts of benevolence flow from a heart that has first been saved by the King!

- The right response to this passage is NOT to try harder.
- The right response is to receive a new heart.

Listen to God’s promises regarding His plan to empower us to be obedient:

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NASB)

Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

- **For the goats among us today, this call to ministry is not for—you first need a new heart.**
- **For the kingdom sheep among us, maybe we to re-surrendered our hearts.**

Here’s the deal—The kingdom is HERE!

- Jesus has done what God required of Him so that we might live WITH God.
- The Holy Spirit has been given to us who are in Christ.

We, therefore, get to GO and bring LIFE and HOPE and GRACE to the “the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the incarcerated...”

These are all works of the kingdom!

- Other places we see that we are to also love orphans, care for widows...

WHY are we to be about this work? —This is KINGDOM WORK!

- It is the heart of God and the work of God to bring mercy and justice to the least of these.

And the Kingdom of heaven is HERE! NOW!

This is what Jesus has been teaching over and over and over for the last many chapters!

- **The Kingdom of heaven IS HERE!**

The kingdom of God is anyplace where the King (God) is ruling

The Kingdom of Heaven is where the will of the King is operative and active.

- The kingdom of heaven is not some far off place in the future but HERE!

Jesus REALLY IS the king—and this changes everything.

Because Jesus is king and I am no longer king:

- This changes my finances—they’re his to control, not mine.
- This changes my marriage & family—that’s the King’s to direct and control.
- This changes our singleness—this is the Lord’s to shepherd and steward and use for His glory!
- This changes our self-identity—we are no longer identified by our gifts or talents or experience or wealth or our past—all of that has been redeemed/purchased back by Christ.

MY WHOLE LIFE IS NOT MINE—IT WAS BOUGHT WITH A PRICE.
If we live in this kingdom, JESUS is the king—not me.

How are we going to do the work of the kingdom?

- There is too much evil.
- There is too much hunger
- There are too many strangers and refugees
- There are too many thirsty
- There are too many prisoners...

How are we going to do this work of the kingdom?

First off, we don't pull up our bootstraps and get 'er done.

**Jesus did not come to earth to get a bunch of servants so He could get His job done.
 Jesus came to serve us and to meet our needs.**

- so we can be right with God
- so we can be free to serve others
- so we can serve in HIS strength—not our own!

I don't believe the world needs another “prove yourself worthy” religion.

- There is already is PLENTY of that...
- People giving their lives to prove their worth and value to their god.

I believe the world has ENOUGH of that.

- There's PLENTY of religion in the world & it brings nothing but striving and competition and fighting.
 - **I don't need a religion.**
 - **What I need is a savior.**

With my track record, I KNOW I would never be good enough or disciplined enough to please God.
 I have sinned every single day of my life!

- I was a slave to my sin and to my brokenness.
- **What I need is someone to SAVE ME and RANSOM me from my slavery.**
- **Once I'm ransomed, I need POWER so I can walk in freedom!**
 - **I need someone to walk WITH me in this new life.**

THIS is what Jesus has been offering us throughout our study in Matthew...

Matthew 20:26-27 (NASB)

...whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many

- The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Jesus doesn't simply save us from sin and then release us to work for him.

Jesus came to ransom us and to serve us in relationship!

This is a RELATIONSHIP we are called to.

- Christ dwells IN US!
- Christ's Spirit EMPOWERS us!

Because Jesus serves us SO WELL, we are able to serve others.

- Church, that is GOOD NEWS—That is the Gospel!

Remember back in Chapter 20:

- **James & John ask Jesus to give them position in the kingdom based on THEIR ability.**
 - **They wanted to satisfy their hearts performing for Jesus—not be satisfied in Jesus’ serving them.**
 - They have been following Jesus for 3 years...
 - But they had TOTALLY missed the SWEET SPOT!

The SWEET SPOT is living from a place of having been served by Jesus.

- This is a place of peace.
- This is a place of maturity.
- This is a place of self-less ness.
- **This sweet spot is a place of intimacy with Jesus that leads us to serve Jesus by serving others around us.**
- **It is NOT a place of honor that is earned or deserved by our hard work of serving others.**

BIG DIFFERENCE!

- **Jesus came for our healing—not for our promotion.**
- **Jesus came to seek and save the lost.**
- King Jesus has served each of us as King—He has served us from a CROSS.
- Just as Jesus lead His disciples to see and understand the world through the lens of the cross....
- We should be careful to cultivate this perspective—this lens—as we look at the world around us.
 - We were bought with a HIGH PRICE!
 - We Have been SAVED from sin.
 - We are SERVED by our savior.
 - We get to ABIDE in Christ and be lead by Him.
 - We get to serve others because we have been so wonderfully served by Jesus.

We’ve GOT to get the story straight or we will NEVER serve Jesus with a right heart.

The message of the Gospel is not that we need to get our act together or we will die.

- The message of the Gospel is that we have all sinned and are already dead.
- Therefore, our only hope is to cling to the God who raises the dead.

If you don’t know Jesus—If you don’t know the KING—the Shepherd... TODAY IS THE DAY!

- Jesus is calling you to Himself today.
- Cry out to God!
- Confess your sins to God—He will forgive you!
- Put your faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

For all you Kingdom Citizens—who are the lease of these in your life?

- We need to ask, Who do I have access to? Who am I called to serve?
- THIS is where Jesus’ heart already is.
- If my heart isn’t there—I need to ask God to shepherd me there...