

## The Final Verdict.

Text: Matt 25:31-36, 46

Suggested Hymns:

485, 492, 325, 282, 305

1) Have we had the saving faith in Christ crucified?

2) Have we in this life given proof of this saving faith?

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 25:31-33, 46, <sup>31</sup> *“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.* <sup>32</sup> *“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.* <sup>33</sup> *“And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.*

... <sup>46</sup> *“And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

In Greek mythology the Furies play an important part in the lives of people. In the thinking of the ancients they were the avenging goddesses, who pursued and haunted the criminal and the evildoer until he was brought to justice. This helps to show that all mankind has a genuine awareness of personal guilt, which troubles and vexes the conscience.

Through the ages humanity has had an inborn conviction that we must someday face the Judgment and give an account to the impartial Judge of heaven and earth, of every idle word we have spoken and of every sin we have committed.

With repeated emphasis Jesus tells us of the Judgment to come. In the week of His crucifixion Jesus gave our text’s account of the last Judgment, with which time will end, and His glorious rule of eternity will be ushered in.

At this final Judgment Jesus Himself shall preside and render the final verdict on all mankind, brought before Him. This verdict will either send them into Satan’s abode or lead them to the glories of heaven. This judgment Jesus has not

entrusted to a human judge, not even to the angels. It is so far-reaching in its implications that Jesus Himself, the sympathetic Saviour, will take care of the judging.

What shall this final Judgment entail? What are the issues? According to Jesus' own statement and account of the last Judgment two questions are involved. First, have we had the saving faith in Christ Crucified? Second, have we in this life given proof of this saving faith? May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Have We Had The Saving Faith In Christ Crucified?**

The first fact that must be established is this, *Have we the faith that saves?* We read, <sup>32</sup> ***“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. <sup>33</sup> “And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.*** All the people of the earth will appear before the judgment seat of Christ and are pinpointed as “sheep” or “goats.”

Who are the sheep? They are the followers of Christ who is the Way, Truth, and the Life and who, on the Last Day, is the Judge seated on the throne of judgment. Of these sheep Jesus says in John 10:27-28, <sup>27</sup> ***“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. <sup>28</sup> “And I give them eternal life.***

These “sheep” believe that Jesus was crucified for our sins and paid in full for our redemption, thus freeing us from the shackles of sin and making us heirs of the eternal mansions in glory. Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:16 ***that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.***

Again after His resurrection Jesus said in Mark 16:16, <sup>16</sup> ***“He who believes and is baptized will be saved.”*** This faith alone will save us from a condemning verdict. Jesus is very emphatic on this score. Jesus says in John 14:6, ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”*** This truth and fact Simon Peter reiterated before the leaders of the Jews when he said in Acts 4:12, <sup>12</sup> ***“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”***

The sheep, then, are the believers, who receive Jesus as the Christ, who died on Calvary to atone for the sins of the world and for their sins. They have had

their robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb. They believe that they are saved solely and alone through faith in this redeeming act of Jesus and have been brought to this faith by the grace of God through the Gospel.

They realise that they have not merited this grace by any achievement of their own. Christ has done it all, and therefore it is possible for God to acquit us. All this is an act of the Holy Spirit, who has called us out of the darkness of sin and led us to the foot of the cross, where all sins are blotted out and remembered no more by God.

And who are the goats? They are the unbelievers. ***He who does not believe will be condemned.***<sup>1</sup>

So the question is this, *What do you think of Christ? What does Jesus mean to you?* Jesus always stressed individuality. It is you and Christ. Believing is never merely or primarily a group or family issue. Each one must personally receive Jesus as Saviour, each one must believe for himself. No one can believe for another or transfer his faith to a friend or a child. That your grandfather was a minister does not get you to heaven. Each person must stand on his own feet and say, *"I believe."* Jesus asks us one by one, *Who am I to you?*

The answer must be clearcut. There can be no hemming and hawing. It is either/or. You believe in Christ Jesus as your Saviour, or you reject Him. Jesus says in Luke 11:23,<sup>23</sup> ***"He who is not with Me is against Me.***

The same Jesus who gave His life on Calvary to redeem us from sin and eternal death is the One who will pass judgment and pronounce the verdict. Therefore there is this unique procedure,<sup>32</sup> ***"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.*** They are separated as they come, before the case is heard. Jesus, the Searcher of hearts, knows whether we really and truly believed when we lived here in time.

This verdict is just, it is inescapable, and it is final. From Christ's decision and pronouncement there is no appeal. The first question, then, is this: *Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Saviour from sin and place all your hope of salvation in His cross?* That question you and I must answer.

## **2. Have We In This Life Given Proof Of This Saving Faith?**

## The Living Faith Serves Christ

The other question which is considered on Judgment Day seeks to determine whether we gave any evidence in this life of possessing this living faith. Did our conduct give any indication that we were believers? The evidence must be apparent to our fellowmen as we rub elbows with them at home, at work, in our leisure hours, and in Kingdom work.

The sheep do everything for Christ's sake. They are motivated by an undying love that rises from a believing heart, and serves Jesus daily. This, Jesus states with these significant words, <sup>34</sup> ***“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: <sup>35</sup> ‘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; <sup>36</sup> ‘I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ ... ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’***<sup>2</sup>

The sheep lived Christ-dedicated lives. Each act was the consecrated outflow of faith in Christ. Daily they asked, *“Lord, what will You have me to do?”*

On the other hand, the goats did everything in self-interest. They were not concerned about the needs of their fellowman if they saw no gain for themselves in helping them. Jesus says to them, ***‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: <sup>42</sup> ‘for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; <sup>43</sup> ‘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.’*** The difference lies in the driving force and incentive: “Christ or self?” is the question.

So the question is this, *“Have you lived the Christian way, doing all to glorify your Lord and Saviour? Was yours a living faith, which dedicated your all to Christ — your time, your energy, your possessions, in short, your entire life?”*

All our activities must stand in relation to Christ. Our service is rendered according to ability. Of him to whom much is given much shall be required,<sup>3</sup> of him who has little or nothing, less shall be demanded. But all must be done out of appreciation of Christ, who gave His life for our redemption.

Jesus does not measure the worth of service by showy applause or glamorous displays. This, Jesus stated one day as He sat near the temple treasury, into which people placed their gifts. Many who were rich cast in much. Then came a poor widow who put in two small coins.

Seeing this Jesus said to His disciples, *“Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; “for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”*<sup>4</sup>

Jesus, the Searcher of hearts, knew that her gift was the expression of a sincere appreciation of God’s goodness and mercy in Christ. It is not easy to place our whole life at the feet of Jesus, dedicating all to Him. However, a living faith does just this.

Note that Jesus, when speaking to the goats does not list any crimes, nor does He brand the unrighteous as robbers or murderers or alcoholics. He speaks of neglects, of failures to do little acts of thoughtfulness, such as feeding the hungry and visiting the sick.

When we have done for the “smallest” people, “little” deeds of kindness for His sake, then we have given proof to the world that our faith is more than lip service. Therewith Jesus links the big as well as the small problems of human want and heartaches to the cross on which He died that all mankind might have hope in a world which lies in despair.

### **The Verdict**

Here we have, then, the final verdict given by Jesus, the Saviour as well as the Judge of all mankind. He looks into the heart for a faith which clings to His atoning cross. This must be the motivating power which prompts every act day by day. We cannot deceive Him. His judgment is right and infallible. What is more important is that His judgment is final.

Our text concludes *“And these [the goats] shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous [the sheep, made righteous in His blood by faith] into eternal life .”*

All this emphasises that there are only two destinations in eternity: heaven and hell; only two roads: the broad, which leads to destruction, and the narrow, which leads into eternal life.

There are only two masters: Christ Jesus or Satan; only two kinds of people at the court of judgment: believers, who received Jesus as their personal Saviour from sin, and unbelievers, who reject Him and refuse to come to the cross to have their sin-bespotted souls washed clean in His blood.

Only those who stand by faith beneath the cross need never fear the Judgment to come. Why not? We have been redeemed through His cross and confess that. We have been chosen, and we rejoice in our salvation. Only those are condemned who stubbornly refuse to accept the grace of God in Christ Jesus. They are not lost because they sinned, but because they will not come and be saved. Only unbelief closes the door of heaven to us.

A minister's son had committed a crime which sent him to prison. His father, greatly distressed by this humiliation, sought to obtain a pardon from the President. For more than a year he interviewed various officials, to obtain this release for his son. At last the document for pardon was signed in the very presence of the father. Then the minister made one final request: Would he be permitted to take this pardon in person to his son? He wanted to see that joyous and exulting expression on his son's face as he would realise that he would come out of the prison.

So the father handed the document to the young man as he sat listlessly in his cell. The son read the scroll without showing any sign of emotion; then handed it back to his father and blandly said, "I do not want to be a free man under a pardon."

God offers to all people pardon and peace through the Cross of Jesus, but thousands upon thousands refuse to receive God's salvation and remain in their sins and go to their eternal doom, forever lost.

### **One Final Thought**

The Day of Judgment has not come as yet. The door of God's mercy still is open. Jesus pleads with us in Revelation 3:20, <sup>20</sup> "***Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.***" If any person — not a majority, not a

determined minority, not an entire family — if just one single soul will listen, to that one Jesus will come, cleanse and heal his soul, and give him eternal life.

The hymnist writes,<sup>5</sup>

O wondrous love, to bleed and die,  
To bear the cross and shame,  
That guilty sinners, such as I,  
Might plead Thy gracious name!

The door still stands open for you and me. We still have time to give ourselves completely to Christ and plead with Him to be merciful to us. We still have time to reach out for others and tell them of Jesus and His love. Today Jesus, with His pierced hands outstretched, pleads, “Come!” And not one single soul who comes will He deny eternal life. Amen

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 16:16

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 25:34-36,40

<sup>3</sup> Luke 12:48

<sup>4</sup> Mark 12:43-44

<sup>5</sup> 325 v 5