

Good Works Rewarded – LD 24

Heidelberg Catechism 4 – 2017

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For our Scripture reading, we turn to Matthew 25. Matthew 25, we will begin in verse 14 and read to the end of the chapter. Matthew 25:14.

14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. 15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. 16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. 17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. 18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. 19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. 20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. 21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. 26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: 27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. 28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. 29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. 30 And cast ye the unprofitable

servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then shall the King say unto you them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. 41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Thus far we read in God's word.

I consider the truth brought to us in Lord's Day 24 this morning. I'm going to consider this morning only Questions and Answers 62 and 63.

Q. 62. Why cannot our good works be the whole, or part of our righteousness before God?

Because, that the righteousness, which can be approved of before the tribunal of God, (that is the judgment seat of God,) must be absolutely perfect, and in all respects conformable to the divine law; and also, that our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin.

Q. 63. What! Do not our good works merit, which yet God will reward in this and in a future life?

This reward is not of merit, but of grace.

Beloved, in the Lord Jesus Christ Lord's Day 23, the previous Lord's Day, has explained to us how we are declared righteous before God, how we are accounted righteous before God. Notice an important distinction now, Lord's Day 23 has not talked to us about righteousness imparted to us. Lord's Day 23 is not talking about that righteousness of God and righteousness of Christ as an attribute of God which he imparts to us, shares with us as a communicable attribute which then is manifest in us through our righteous behavior so that we do righteous things, Lord's Day 23 is not talking about righteousness from that point of view. It's not talking about imparted righteousness, it's talking about imputed righteousness which means righteousness that has been accounted as ours, judged as ours. It doesn't come out of us, isn't produced by us, in fact, is the righteousness of Christ as our representative which he earned for us and imputed into our account so that God looks at us as if we were righteous with the righteousness of Christ, and then declares it to be so. God then declares us righteous in Christ.

That's the righteousness of Lord's Day 23 and we saw last time how that righteousness is ours and comes to be ours, it's the righteousness, as we just mentioned, of Christ. Christ earned it. It's righteousness that he merited for us and imputed to us and put over to us in our account. And it's righteousness also that we here on earth as believers having faith, can come to know and to receive and to embrace in our own consciousness, so that within our own hearts we hear, by faith, the declaration of God saying, "You are righteous, legally righteous in Jesus Christ." His righteousness is imputed to you.

And that we noticed also, is all of grace. It's all of grace. It's a free gift that God gives to his elect people in and through Jesus Christ. Lord's Day 23 then makes no mention of works except that it implies that works are excluded from that righteousness, righteousness from that point of view, justification. When it says faith only, the Catechism means not works, works which form some basis of our righteousness before God, but Christ's righteousness only. What about my works, then? Aren't those a reality in my life? Don't I do righteous things as well? Lord's Day 23 hasn't spoken about those. What about my works, then? And that's where Lord's Day 24 comes from and that's why we have a Lord's Day 24 to speak to us about our works.

Notice again the intensely practical nature of the Heidelberg Catechism. I can't help but mention that now again this morning. The Catechism does not leave the treatment of works until the third section of the Catechism. The Heidelberg Catechism doesn't say, "That's not important. Good works are not important, it can wait until then. We'll get to that later. Let's talk about the important things right now." The Heidelberg Catechism doesn't leave all treatment about works until the third section of the Catechism. In fact, even if it did, the Catechism would reveal a great interest in good works. We noticed that that third section of the Catechism is more than one third of the Catechism, is itself already just over 40% of the Catechism, if we only look at the third section. But here already early in the Catechism, second section of the Catechism, we have a Lord's Day dedicated to good works. The Heidelberg Catechism and the Reformed faith which is described by and formed and shaped by the Heidelberg Catechism as well as the other creeds, the forms of unity, is a Catechism and a faith that is concerned about good works.

Why can't works be a basis for our righteousness before God? That question is asked and answered by this Lord's Day. Don't our good works merit something with God? That question is asked and answered by this Lord's Day. And, after all, the Lord's Day says aren't these good works rewarded? And that too is addressed by this Lord's Day and by our sermon this morning. Good and important questions and we we'll deal with them in the reverse order that we just mentioned them in. Good works rewarded. First of all, the fact, looking then at the reward that God gives according to works. Good works rewarded, the fact. Secondly, the reason. The reason. And thirdly, the basis. There is a reward according to works, not a reward on the basis of works but a reward according to works nevertheless. We will return to that when we come to our third point but we want that established already at the outset. There is a reward according to works.

Reward and the reward according to works then is Reformed doctrine. We find that in Question 63 of this Lord's Day. "Do not our good works merit, which yet God will reward in this and in a future life?" If we take the first part of the question away, we have a positive statement about good works and reward. God will reward in this and in a future life our good works. The same is brought out in the Belgic Confession, Article 24. "In the meantime," the Article says, "we do not deny that God rewards our good works."

We notice at the beginning how also that there is a negative reward as well. That's not our focus this morning, our focus is going to be on the positive side of the reward, but there is a negative reward too. There is a consequence for sin or consequences for sin. That's the other side of the reward of good works. There is also a reward of sin. When one sins, there are going to be consequences tied to that sin that the individual is going to suffer on account of those sins, but good works receive a positive reward.

Good works, of course, are those done according to the law of God, not done according to one's own imagination. We can't come up with our own ideas to what a good work is, it must be according to the law of God and therefore it must be done out of love for God which is the heart of the law. Good works must be done to the glory of God, not so that others see us and admire us, but for the glory of God and, thirdly, out of faith. It ties in again with Lord's Day 23, faith that justifies is a faith also that produces good works. More on that, Lord willing, next time.

But there is a reward. There is a reward, beloved, for every single good work. For every good work that the child of God does, there is a reward for the faithful suffering, not simply suffering, but faithful suffering and especially faithful suffering for Christ's sake, suffering that comes upon us because we maintain truth and holiness according to the Scriptures and walk with Christ, there is for that reward. Great works such as that, for example, Matthew 5:10-12, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven," for great is your reward in heaven, "for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." There is a reward for great faithful suffering for Christ's sake.

But there is a reward, beloved, also for we might call them small good works or good works which we hardly took notice of, maybe didn't even really, weren't really even fully aware that we did them and have forgotten them long ago. God doesn't forget them. God remembers them and God rewards us according to them. We find that in Matthew 25, a passage that we read, verses 37 and 38, for example. There we have an insight into the final judgment and the Judge says, Jesus Christ as Judge says, "You did these good things and I am going to give you a reward for these good things and then shall the righteous answer him saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? When did we do these things?" And the King instructs them and reminds them that when they served the least of his children, they served him. It wasn't that they were oblivious to that, they knew it, but it was something that they said, "is simply our calling, simply what we did. We didn't do this in order to gain some great reward, we didn't do this for the rest for our lives and pat ourselves on the back about it. We simply did our good works. We did our calling." But the Lord remembers and there is a reward according to every good work.

When we speak in that language, rewarded according to works, we are speaking in biblical language. That's the way Scripture always speaks of the reward. It never speaks of the reward as that we are rewarded on the basis of our good works but always is rewarded according to good works. And one thing that that phrase means, rewarded according to good works, one thing that phrase means is that when we do less good works, there is less of reward, and when we do more good works, there is more of a reward. Sometimes there is lack of clarity on that but that's the Scripture. God will somewhat anyway, match up a reward to good works. The greater the work, the greater the reward. The less the work, the less the reward. It comes out in the parable that we noticed in Matthew 25 of the various servants and given different talents and the one who gained much was rewarded with much and the one who gained less was rewarded with less. That's a reward according to works.

What is the reward that we can expect as God's people, privileged to perform good works? The reward essentially is God himself. The reward is Christ, God in Christ, and the enjoyment of God in Christ. The reward can be spoken of from another point of view really saying the same thing as it is a reward of glory. Glorious, glorious reward. Not one of God's children we will get to heaven and say, "This is it?" Exactly the opposite. Every one of God's children will receive the reward that God gives to us and be overwhelmed at the abundance, at the glory, at the tremendous nature of the reward that God gives to us.

That reward is something that we can expect in a future life. The Catechism speaks of the reward that way as something we will receive in a future life, first of all. The chapter we read gives us some insights into that. Verse 34 we read, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The kingdom, a place in that kingdom, greater place for more works, lesser place according to lesser works, but a place in the kingdom nonetheless.

A place, beloved, with the King. Whenever we hear of kingdom we must always think of the King who reigns in that kingdom, the glorious King, a place under the King, an opportunity to serve the King. That's part of our reward. The reprobate said, "I don't want that. Serve the King? There are things I have to do? There is obedience that is required of me in heaven? There is work? I don't want any of that." The child of God delights to hear it, "I have a place in the kingdom and I have the privilege of serving the King! I have a glorious, glorious future! What a reward!"

And then too, to rule. Heaven is not only ruling, it's not only serving, it's both. We serve the King by ruling within the kingdom. That comes out in verse 21 of the chapter. Verse 21, "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." Ruler. We're going to rule under Christ but within his creation, within his kingdom. And again, there will be positions of ruling according to the good works that God has given to us to do.

Again, verse 30 gives us some insight into that future reward. Verse 30, "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." That's the opposite side but from that we can infer also what the positive is. If the negative reward for sin, for wickedness, for the reprobate is outer darkness, for God's people the reward is light. Light. The light of the knowledge of God. That's what light stands for, the knowledge of God and righteousness, moral purity, brilliant light of moral perfection.

Verse 21 also speaks of elements of that reward. You see how Scripture presents the reward and there is a multifaceted thing, all of these different things to consider. We're only speaking of some of them this morning. Verse 21, "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Is there anything else, beloved, that you need, anything else we want but to step from this life of service into that and hear those words, "Well done, good and faithful servant"? Approval of God. The enjoyment of the approval of God will be part of our reward. And again, the verse ends this way, "enter thou into the joy of thy lord." The joy. A joy unspeakable. A joy full of glory. That's the reward, part of the reward that we look forward to in the future.

Verse 46 speaks of the reward as simply life eternal, the essence of which is the fellowship of God. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee and thy Son Jesus Christ," Christ himself says. That reward is something we look forward to in the future but, beloved, the Catechism, you notice, mentions that that reward is also to be expected in this life. The Question, "Do not our good works merit, which yet God will reward in this and in a future life?" But in this life too there is a reward according to works. We need to understand that. We need to understand that clearly and embrace that. That's the truth of God's word. That's tremendously encouraging. There is a reward in this life. As we walk in good works, again which God has foreordained by the grace and power of God and by Christ living in us and as we feed upon the word, but as we walk in a way of good works, we enjoy a reward according to those works in this life.

And again from the passage, the reward in the future is not fundamentally and essentially different from the reward in this life but from Matthew 25 and other passages of Scripture we can infer what that reward in this life is, it's certainly a sense of approval, of God's approval. As delightful as it is to think of entering into heaven and hearing the Father say at the end of it all after we have fought our good fight and finished our course, to hear the Father say unto us, "Well done," he says that already now too. As we live our life according to his word, he says to us in our hearts and he says to us through the word, he says to you this morning, "Well done. Well done, good and faithful servant." We enjoy a sense of that approval more as we walk more zealously in good works and less as we are more slothful in the calling to live in good works.

The same is true with regard to life eternal. Christ has given us the principle of life already but the enjoyment of that life comes to us in the way of good works and according to our good works. The fellowship of God and enjoying that fellowship of God, not the right to it but enjoying that fellowship of God, comes to us according to works. That's a reward of grace that God gives to us.

The same is true with regard to ruling. Not ruling over the creation or over the new creation but ruling even over our own spirit as in Christ we are kings and as we grow in righteousness and in our ability to walk in godliness, that's a reward. Isn't that an amazing thing, an encouraging thing? As we walk in good works, God continues to give us more power and ability to walk in good works. That's how we grow in sanctification, in holiness. There is a reward according to works that we enjoy already in this life.

Now, beloved, there are those who whenever they hear of a reward immediately think merit. "That's what I hear. If I hear of reward, I immediately think of merit." That's the response of the Roman Catholic Church. That's the response that's answered here in this Lord's Day, Lord's Day 24. "What!" There is an exclamation. "What! Do not our good works merit, which yet God will reward in this and in a future life?" And the argument, the reasoning goes this way: "When I hear about a reward that's according to works, I insert merit into that. If I understand that God rewards me according to works, then I believe," says the Roman Catholic, "then I believe that there is an earning that's happening. I merit it with God. That's how I've gotten this reward in this life and in the next." And that's the same error of the new theologians who claim to have a new perspective on Paul or Federal Vision theologians, the same understanding, the same thinking. If there is a reward, then there must be a connection that is meritorious between the reward and the work.

Others too may respond the same way. "If I hear of a reward according to works, if I hear that in the way of godliness, the way of obedience there is an increase in the enjoyments and consciousness of living with God, then I hear merit because that's how I think of things and that's the only way I can understand things." We have to ask ourselves that question, is that how we understand it? If it is, if that's how we approach this, then we're going to, even if we acknowledge there is something to this reward of grace thing, we're going to want to put it aside far away and be leery of it. We're not going to be so sure we really want much to do with it because it makes us uneasy because immediately we are

thinking of merit and that merit is getting in the way. But we know that's wrong. We know we may not have anything of that, of that merit.

The fact is we may not think that way. We may not think of merit as being the connection between the work and the reward. We may not think that way. We do, even as according to our creeds, we do merit with God all right. Article 21 of the Belgic Confession speaks of Christ and his suffering and what he felt, feeling the terrible punishment which our sins had merited. There is the merit. It's a merit of sin. Good works don't merit but sin does and sin merits punishment, sin deserves punishment, and the Article is telling us Christ took that which we had merited, which we had earned, which we had deserved rightfully, he took that upon himself and suffered that punishment in our place. But apart from that there is no merit for the child of God or for anyone else apart from Jesus Christ.

Good works do not merit with God. Not at all. Why is that? Answer 62 speaks of it. "Why cannot our good works be the whole, or part of our righteousness before God?" Why can't our good works be that which establishes us as righteous before God and then merits a reward? "Because the righteousness which can be approved of before the judgment seat of God must be absolutely perfect." That's not our good works. Our good works are not perfect, not absolutely perfect, not even close, the answer says. "Our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin." We can't do the kind of good work that merits with God. Cannot. We are sinners.

And the same thing is true with regard to the Belgic Confession again, Article 24. "Moreover, though we do good works, we do not found our salvation upon them; for we do no work but what is polluted by our flesh, and also punishable." Good to remember that. The best work we do if we are ever tempted to be proud, remember this: we do a good work and we think of that good work and we admire that good work and perhaps we even pat ourselves on the back a little bit about that good work and then we remind ourselves that that good work is worthy of punishment. That's how far short it comes. That's how sinful it is. That's how sin-stained and sin-laden it is. It deserves punishment. That's the teaching of the word of God and the teaching of the creeds.

Don't ever think then of merit, beloved, but think of grace. Of grace. That's what this reward is all about and the difference, it's not a small difference, the difference between merit and grace, the difference between thinking that my good work merits a reward and my good work is graciously rewarded, undeservedly rewarded, the difference is the difference between heaven and hell. It's the difference between salvation and damnation. That's how critical this is. Then when we do begin to think wherever it creeps into our mind that we think, "I deserve something from God because of my good works," banish that. Repent of that. Drive that out of your mind. Flee again to the cross of Christ, confess your sins, cling to his righteousness, look unto him for forgiveness and grace to carry on.

The reward is all of grace. That's the short but direct answer of the Catechism. This reward, not denying the reward, this reward is not of merit but of grace. That's the same teaching of the Belgic Confession, Article 24 again. "In the meantime, we do not deny that God rewards our good works," we read that phrase already but the rest of the

sentence is this, "but it is through his grace that he crowns his gifts." How beautiful is that? It is through his grace that he crowns his gifts, meaning, crowns refers to the reward, gifts refers to our good works, and the link according to that phrase, the link between the two is grace. But think even of the fact that our good works there are referred to as gifts and there already we see grace. My good work isn't something I contribute to my salvation, my good work isn't something that I present to God as my gift to him as if to think I do a good work and I put it in my hand and I polish it all up and I run to God and I hold it out and say, "Look what I have done," expecting that we deserve a reward. But rather we ought to look at it this way: God in his grace doesn't need to but it pleases him, gives us these good works to do. He has foreordained them for us to do in eternity and he works them in us mysteriously but marvelously through our union with Jesus Christ and by the power of the Spirit under the preaching of the word. He works these good works in us as gifts that he gives to us and then God says, "Well done." After he has done it all, he has worked it all, he has made us active, he has made us conscious absolutely, but all the credit is his. Then he says, "Well done. Here's the reward that goes along with that good work." Beloved, there are not too many doctrines in the word of God that bring out the graciousness of his grace, but this glorious doctrine. What an amazing thing and what a shout will be heard on that judgment day when Christ in his grace crowns his gifts. What a shout of praise and glory to our God for his grace and only for his grace.

It is in grace that we are rewarded according to our works. Understand that and understand too when we speak of receiving certain things from God in the way of obedience, the necessary way of the covenant, that's what we're speaking of. Not a reward that is merited but a reward of grace graciously given because it pleases God.

That that reward is all of grace is seen also in the passage, seen in all in the word of God, but also listen to this, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." That's not merit, is it? You didn't earn the reward over many things, you earned a reward over a few. You have been faithful in a few, then what merits would be, "Then I will give you few as far as reward." Grace is seen there too. And sure as we said, absolutely as the Scripture says, there is a reward according to works. God gives some reward that matches in some way with works and yet it's altogether undeserved even in that for we do but a little good work, but a tiny good work, and that altogether by the grace of God, but we do a tiny good work and God says, "Because of that and according to that, I am going to grant you a great reward graciously as a gift."

Verse 34 also brings out that that reward is something inherited. Inherited. Verse 34 says, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." An inheritance isn't something that is earned either, is it? Inheritance in daily life so as the inheritance in God's kingdom is an inheritance graciously given. Not deserved, not earned, but given freely and undeservedly according to works but all of grace. And that's because Christ merited, beloved, he did. Not one of us will ever merit with God or ever has merited with God but Christ has. He has merited with God by his good works and there is the basis for

all of this. There is the foundation for all this work of God, granting us the gifts and in grace crowning the gifts as well because Jesus Christ has gone to the cross, because he has taken our sins, our corruption, our pollution upon himself, our old nature as well as the merit of punishment that is due to us on account of our own sins, he has taken that upon himself and he suffered. He suffered the wrath of God that we deserved, that we merited, that we earned. He suffered that wrath of God in love towards God, never once flinching from perfect love of God, in absolute perfect obedience to God. He fulfilled all the law as if we had kept that law perfectly because he was our representative through all of his life and through all of his suffering. He laid the basis for the reward of grace.

And that too we could say is, in turn, based upon God's eternal decree, God's electing of us in eternity in Jesus Christ with the cross in view already in eternity. Verse 34 speaks of that as well. When there is judgment and in the great and final judgment, the decision, the dividing is not on the basis of works, the dividing between sheep and goats, those on the left and those on the right, is on the basis of a foreordination, the basis of a predestination in Jesus Christ and a reprobation apart from him. That's verse 34 again, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Before he ever did any works, there was already a kingdom foreordained for you. Enter therein.

The basis of God's judgment of us, then, is seen in the passage, verse 32 and following, "before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." And that because of his eternal decree, not of works is that judgment made, not our works anyway. They were already divided based on Christ. And then, according to the parable too, already divided, his judgment is already rendered, who enters the kingdom and who does not. Already divided and then we read of a reward according to works; then we read of a mention of works, good works and sins, and a reward according thereto.

That will be the case at the end, the final judgment. Don't fear that final judgment, look forward to it. Don't fear it at all. It's nothing to be afraid of. You can stand before the tribunal of God, before that judgment seat of God with absolute confidence. The judgment rendered is righteous, "Not guilty on the basis of Jesus Christ and his work." Reward, yes. According to works, yes. But all of grace. All of it found based in Jesus Christ and his merit, his earning for us.

But recognize too, beloved, that's the case every day. That's the way it will be at the final judgment but that's the way it is today too as we stand in daily judgment before the Judge. That's the case too. Every day, every moment the Judge judges. He looks upon us and he says about us at this moment as every day of our life, he looks upon us and he says, "Righteous. I'm not looking at their works, of course not. I'm looking at the work of my Son. There is the basis for my judgment. There is the basis, the work of Jesus Christ, only the work of Jesus Christ, my Son, their Savior. I render the judgment, unchangeable judgment, they are righteous in him and I will reward them according to their works." That we hear too. That we understand too as spoken by the Judge. "And the basis for that

reward is Christ again, only Christ, only grace that is theirs through him. Only his merit. Only what he earned. But I will reward them because it pleases me. And I will reward them in grace according to their works that I might be known by them and seen by them as the only adorable God, the only gracious God, overflowing and abundant in grace and mercy and freely unearned but freely given salvation in Jesus Christ, my Son." Hear that judgment, beloved. Live in the knowledge of that judgment. Enjoy the reward according to grace and praise the God of grace. Amen.

Father, we thank thee for thy word and we thank thee for thy Son and we thank thee for thy grace. How marvelous it is. May we always cling to it and may we never cease to speak of it and to praise thee for it. In Jesus' name. Amen.