

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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The Gospel of Matthew

The Final Judgment and the Reality of Hell

Part 1 - The Separation of the Wheat from the Weeds

May 31, 2020

Sermon Text: Matthew 25:31-46

Scripture Reading: Romans 2:12-29

The Olivet Discourse, Matthew 24-25, concludes with the great event Christ has been pointing us to in His teaching and parables here – The Final Judgment. It is to that climax of this world's history that we now come to. Listen and hear it very carefully:

Matthew 25:31-46 ESV “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. (32) Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another

as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (33) And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

(34) Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by 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 welcomed me, (36) I was 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, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? (38) And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? (39) And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ (40) And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

(41) “Then he will say to those on his

left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (42) For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, (43) I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’

(44) Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ (45) Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’

(46) And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

The first thing we need to think carefully about here is *the reality of this event our Lord is describing.*

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. (32) Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

The Son of Man is coming. Not as the baby of Bethlehem, not as the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, but *in His glory*. As He now is. Exalted. Enthroned. Unveiled deity. ALL the angels with Him. For the wicked, this is going to be far more terror-filled than the thunderings Israel heard at Mt. Sinai.

Psalms 98:7-9 ESV Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! (8) Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together (9) before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

If you are a Christian, you long for this Day to come. At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described the people of His kingdom. And one quality He identified is this:

Matthew 5:6 ESV “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

The wicked do not hunger and thirst for righteousness. They may claim that they do, but righteousness opposes who they are and what they do. The wicked call right, wrong. And wrong, right. They do not want justice. They hate

Christ because they know that the Day is going to go against them. And moment by moment the Lord is reminding them of this:

John 16:7-11 ESV Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. (8) And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: (9) concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; (10) concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; (11) concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

Christ's people yearn for this Day. We pray that the Lord will come, and come quickly. We see the injustice and evil and the suffering it brings and we know when He comes He is going to put everything right. And putting everything right includes dispensing perfect justice for us and to the wicked. Moment by moment the wicked are being reminded of all this by the Holy Spirit. He is right now convicting and reminding the world of:

- Sin
- Righteousness

- Judgment

Now, in the parables here in Matthew 25, we have been seeing five foolish and five wise bridesmaids. Two wise and one wicked and unbelieving servants. In other words, a mixture.

Matthew 13:27-30 ESV And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' (28) He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' (29) But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. (30) Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

This then is the state of the kingdom of heaven now. A mixture of wheat and weeds. Of the true and the false. Of the righteous and the wicked. All professing to be following Christ, but the majority being hypocrites and wicked.

In other words, this is the condition of the visible church now. The enemy has

placed his weeds in with the wheat. But on that Day, the great and final separation is going to take place. Not one true child of God will be lost, and not a single evil counterfeit will escape.

Now, think carefully about this. Here it is from a bit different angle:

Matthew 7:21-23 ESV “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (22) On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ (23) And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

Let’s state it this way:

While the idolater and irreligious pagan will also be judged when Christ comes – those who make no profession of knowing Christ at all – the emphasis we see in Scripture concerning the final judgment is the sifting of those who profess to follow Christ, The separation of the wheat from the weeds who have been sown among Christ’s true people by the enemy.

See it? Both groups come to Christ on that Day and say “Lord, Lord! Look at all we have done in your name.” That is to say, they are all in that sense professing Christians.

If we are going to be wise about evil, then we need to stop with all of this widespread nonsense thinking in the churches that assumes most everyone who is a church member is a Christian. We must be done with allowing ourselves to be pressured by supposed teachers in the church who tell us that to think otherwise is to be guilty of the sin of “judging.”

And yet, if you will think carefully and honestly about what the Bible says, you will understand that the emphasis upon the Day of Judgment is upon *the separation of the wheat from the tares*. It is upon the sifting out of those who merely *say* they are Christ’s people from those who actually *are* Christ’s people.

We have been studying First John in the midweek online Bible study sessions [NOTE: you can access these on the unholy charade youtube channel, the CRC sermon audio channel, and on the CRC Facebook page]. If you have been following these studies, I want you to step back and look at the whole big picture. What is it that John is telling

us? Is he primarily speaking about people who are rank pagan idolaters? No! He is teaching us over and over again that:

This is what a true Christian thinks and looks like. And this is what a counterfeit Christian thinks and looks like. The person who walks in sin does not know Christ. The person who knows Christ walks in righteousness.

And why did John write these things *to the churches*??

1 John 2:26 ESV I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.

1 John 3:7 ESV Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.

And in 2 John he will keep right on saying it:

2 John 1:7-8 ESV For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. (8) Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.

So let me say it again:

The Bible's frequent emphasis in its teaching on the Day of Judgment is upon *the separation of the wheat from the tares*. The main focus is upon the sifting out of those who merely *say* they are Christ's people from those who actually *are* Christ's people.

All the Nations Gathered before Him

Christ is the King of all nations. Every human being answers to Him, regardless of what nationality or race they may be. He is one and the same King to them all, and all will stand before Him for judgment.

But notice even in this regard, there is this ongoing element of attempted deception on the part of the wicked.

Matthew 25:32 ESV Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

The picture is of one great herd of sheep and goats mixed together. All, it seems, belonging to one flock. And then later we hear the goats say:

Matthew 25:44 ESV Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’

They call Him Lord, and by this ingenuous question they claim that they have served and obeyed Him, or at least never actively opposed Him or mistreated Him.

Many if not most people will be quite offended if you tell them that they hate Christ. They live as they want, they make no claim to be a Christian perhaps, and yet they are just like these goats – “we never refused to feed you or clothe you or help you when you were sick or when you were in prison.” And yet, as Jesus tells them, they did all these crimes against Him. How?

When the wicked fail to love Christ’s people, they fail to love Christ. When they hate Christ’s people, they demonstrated their hatred for Christ.

Notice this phrase Jesus uses when He addressed the righteous (the sheep) -

Matthew 25:40 ESV And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

See it? “*the least of these my brothers.*”

A person’s hatred for Christ is demonstrated by his hatred for Christ’s people. Similarly, in the same way, this is how our love for Christ is demonstrated – by love for His people.

1 John 3:11-15 ESV For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. (12) We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. (13) Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. (14) We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. (15) Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Don’t mistake Christ’s words here for some works righteousness social gospel. He is not telling us that the way to be saved on the Day of Judgment is to do all kinds of good deeds now:

- Feed the poor
- Clothe the naked
- Visit prisoners in jail

Many so-called Christian ministries are no more than this. Works. What then is Christ's point here? It is this:

Those who are born again and thus truly know Christ will love their brothers and sisters in Christ. They will not see their brethren hungry or thirsty or naked or persecuted and turn a blind eye to them. They will love them, and love not only in word, but in deed.

This difference between the sheep and the goats can be observed even now.

1 John 2:19 ESV They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

John 13:34-35 ESV A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. (35) By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

And again:

1 John 4:20-21 ESV If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a

liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. (21) And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

So listen carefully to Jesus again:

Matthew 25:44-46 ESV Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' (45) Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' (46) And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

And then ask yourself this question – honestly:

Do I love Christ's real people? Do I love to be with them? Am I ready and willing to help them when they are in need? Will I stand with them when they are persecuted for professing Christ?

Because, you see, these things are what tell us the condition of our own heart and whether we are sheep or goats. On that Day, it won't be the sheep you are

standing before, it will be the Shepherd King. You will either have loved Him or hated Him, and He knows the answer perfectly. The fact is that many people today who claim to be Christians, if Christ Himself were to encounter them and He were hungry or thirsty or persecuted or cold and shivering without adequate clothes – those “Christians” would detest Him and refuse Him. We know because this is exactly what they are doing now in spite of all their claims to religion.

Now, one final word and an introduction to next time:

Matthew 25:46 ESV And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

I want us to look carefully into this matter of *eternity*. And specifically into what Christ calls *eternal punishment*. We have often taught and heard about the New Heavens and Earth, the New Creation which is coming for Christ’s people. But I want us to give some serious time to this topic of *eternal punishment*.

Matthew 25:41 ESV “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Eternal fire. Eternal punishment. Prepared and waiting not only for the devil and his demon angels, but for every person who hates and rejects Christ.

These are sobering, intense words. They are words spoken by the King Himself. We would do well to heed them very carefully.