



Free Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
in South Africa

Sermon for the Last Sunday of the Church Year (Proper 29A) 2017

When the Son of Man comes in Glory ...!



St. John's Lutheran Parish
Shelly Beach

The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Mt 25, 31-46:

- ^{ESV 31} "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."

Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, enlighten our minds and bless our hearts with Your holy Word. Prepare us for the Last Day. Bless us and make us fruitful servants of Your gifts. Amen.*

Dear Congregation in Christ!

- *“When the Son of Man comes in His Glory and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.”* What a majestic verse! Jesus will come in all His Glory. The Glory that literally blinded Paul on his way to Damascus. By this time we and all the dead will be resurrected and those still alive by that time will be transformed in the twinkling of an eye.
- The Holy One of God, the One crucified for us, will return in full Glory.
- And so, all people of all times will be gathered for the final separation. *The* Shepherd will separate the sheep from the goats. The sheep to His right and the goats to His left.
- This will be final. There will be no discussion over this final judgement. Any discussion you want to have with God- it needs to be sorted out now. Now is the time of Grace. Now is the time to talk to Him.
- When I was younger I asked myself, how can this passage be called “Gospel”? It seems to be teaching ‘what you sow is what you reap’. It seems as if all depends on what you do, or what you have done in your life. That has been a scary fact for me, because how can I be certain, that I have done enough. When I scanned my life, I always seemed to land up at the goats: how many times did I not neglect to help where I should have helped. I missed more than one- ‘you will stand on the side of the goats’ would be my verdict- so I reasoned. It was only until I seriously studied this parable, because I had to preach on it, years back, that it struck me how much of the parable I had simply overlooked.
- This just shows how much we are stuck in ‘what you sow is what you will reap’ dogma. It is common sense in all religions, because old Adam reasons like this. So, when we read the Scriptures, we read the words, but we only seem to be struck by these passages which refer to our works or fruits etc. Therefore it is essential to study each passage in detail expecting to find things which we have never seen before.
- Take for instance, did you notice Jesus separates sheep from goats. He has already got two kinds of people in front of Him. He just needs to sort them.
- And what are these two kinds? [34] *“Come, you who are blessed by my Father ...”* those are the sheep and on the other hand *“Depart from me, you cursed”* ... those are the goats. The sheep, God’s true children, are blessed by Him. Nothing to do

with works-rigtheousness. They are sheep, because the Father blessed them. Do you hear how this resonates with Jesus' sermon on the mount "*blessed are the poor in the Spirit*"? They are the children of God, because God has forgiven them and blessed them with the gift of the Holy Spirit, by Baptism and teaching them the word of Christ. Pure Sola Gratia- Grace alone!

- And the goats? They refused to be blessed. They remained cursed under the wrath of God. Jesus actually took their curse on Himself, to give them the blessing of the Father, but they, for some or other reason, never came to receive their gift, or did receive it at some stage but then sadly threw it away again. So, they sit without the blessing of the Father.

- And dear congregation, this is why we may call this passage a true Gospel-reading because it does preach the pure Gospel. Not only the Gospel, it preaches the Law also.

- It is important to understand and see this part of the passage first, because now we will understand what goes on in the rest of it.

- If one would only dive into the last part, without realising what we have heard so far, then it might seem as if Jesus is an unfair judge. To the sheep, the righteous, the blessed of the Father, Jesus says the following [40]: "*Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.*" We have heard the story. The righteous will be surprised, because when had they ever helped Jesus? Jesus reveals to them that whenever they helped one of His least brothers, especially focusing on the weakest in the church, they did it to Him! In other words, helping your needy brothers in Christ is doing it to Jesus! Now, see how graciously Jesus look at the good works of His sheep [40]: "*as you did it to ONE of the least*"... Even if this sheep has done only one fruit, passing on the blessing of God only once, will it count as genuine faith. Faith produces good works. Only a good tree can produce good fruit. Jesus needs only one such a fruit of the spirit which will reveal true faith.

- On the other hand, when He comes to the goats, Jesus is enormously strict [41-43]: "*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. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, 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.” They will be surprised too, when did we see you, Jesus, asking us? [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.”*

• Did you get it? He is only looking at the one time one of the least of Him was not helped by this person! Here Jesus looks according to the Law of God- these people are still under the Law of God. They didn't want to receive the righteousness of Christ. They stand on their own before the accusing Law of God. And this is a scary space to be in, under the wrath of God, His curse hanging over your head. You and your failures alone in the presence of the Son of Man!

• But, this is a completely unnecessary scenario! God has prepared your Exodus from this world into eternal Life. It is really true, He has done everything for you. He continues to form and shape you and especially your heart to see the Death of Christ as Your salvation, as Your blessing. In His discipleship He makes you merciful, so that you will notice the least ones of Christ and will have compassion on them and help them, wherever you can.

• We are sheep, because He blesses us and this opens our hearts to share His blessings with others.

• Please, let us not go and judge between sheep and goats. That part belongs to Christ. As blessed, poor in the spirit disciples of Christ, ourselves being the least ones Christ speaks about, we help where we see need without asking what we will get out of it. There is a good reason for this: We have already received the greatest gift of all- the blessing of our heavenly Father. Sins are forgiven, born again as child of God, waiting for the final Day of the Lord, when we will finally and fully enter eternal Life! **Amen.**

*The Lord Jesus Christ says: “Surely I am coming soon. Amen. Come. Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all of you.” **Amen.***