

## Matthew 25:31-46

**31** "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. **32** All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. **33** He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. **34** "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation 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** I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit 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** When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? **39** When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' **40** "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' **41** "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire 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, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' **44** "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' **45** "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' **46** "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

How do these make you feel? *The last day* of summer vacation. | *The last day* of school. | *The last day* before your loved one arrives home. | *The last day* before you and your loved ones must be ripped apart. | *The last day* of being 39. | If you were a soldier back from West Africa (Operation United Assistance): your *last day* of the 21-day Ebola quarantine. **Your reaction to "it's the last day" depends on what's coming next. Right?**

What's your reaction to the Last Day? Jesus gives us a look ahead to that day: the end of this age - Judgment Day.

Jesus gives a vivid image of His return on the Last Day.

 In His Glory: [image]

 All his angels with him: Revelation describes the angels as 10,000 times 10,000. Ever seen an array of 100 million warriors? [image]



- 👉 On His glorious throne: [image]
- 👉 King of Heaven. Judge of All Nations.



What will the outcome be on that day? For you? For me? For people whom you know and love? Let's look at the answers to those questions.

Jesus speaks to one group on the Last Day who will *come into an inheritance*. The circumstances surrounding this inheritance, however, are different from the usual. This inheritance is received not at a death, but at a meeting with the Giver – with the One who **actually** earned the inheritance for you. And how is that possible? Oh, to be sure, there **was** a death that occurred to bring this inheritance to you. There was a lifetime of work, too, prior to the death. But following the life and the death came something unique in all of History: Resurrection! Yes, Jesus rose to life, never to die again!

This same Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead.

*What does this mean for you? For me?*

This means there will actually come a day when I will stand before him face-to-face. This also means the Living One sees everything in my life **now**. I can't hide any of my thoughts or actions from his sight.

People joke about the things kids say and do: "Better be careful, that one could get you written out of the will" - "No inheritance for you!" Sometimes that is said as mere banter. Other times it is an unspoken reality which a person only later finds out. There's a woman who told what it was like to hear at her father's death what he had written in his will: "I leave no bequest [no inheritance] to my daughter for reasons known to her." <http://vitals.nbcnews.com/news/2012/03/15/10702917-last-will-and-contempt-the-pain-of-being-disinherited?lite>

I look this way (at self) and I know a lifetime full of reasons why I deserve to have God write me off: "You're out – no inheritance for you!"

How could I ever expect to hear him say to me, "Come into your inheritance"? Look right here [Bible]. His will is written. Look at what it says...

**The verdict you, dear Christian, will hear on the Last Day is: *Come into your inheritance* – the kingdom prepared for you – eternal life (vs.46).**

How can that be, you might ask, when I've done so much against Him –so much sin – so much evil?

Dear Christian, just look to the tender words Jesus uses to describe you. "Blessed by my Father." "Righteous." (vs.37 & v.46). **We know** all too well eternal life with God in his kingdom is not because of anything we have done (Titus 3:4-5). He has washed away our sin – He has covered us with a lifetime of his righteous works. No sin, no stain, remains on your record – or mine. We are so blessed by Him!

If that's the basis for our verdict, why, then, does Jesus mention believers' good deeds on Judgment Day?

All our sin has been washed away in the great tide of Jesus' blood, so the only thing remaining on our record is the good. But these good deeds are only the external indicators of the faith that resides inside our hearts: we know that we are not forgiven and innocent before God by our works, but rather only by faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16).

Even the response of believers on the last day highlights that there is no hope placed in the works that Jesus mentions. Take a close look at their attitude. They didn't keep track of the good works done in their lives – *“Helped the old woman across the street? Check. Raked leaves for my neighbor? Check.” None of that!* Believers were **not** trying to earn the Lord's favor. *They simply loved the Lord because He first loved us (1 John 4:19), and lived lives of joy and love towards others (1 John 4:10-11).*



Dear Christian, focus on this comforting scene before you today! For there will be times when the devil will hurl your sin in your face, whispering poisonous accusations at you. . .scaring you with twisted images of your Judgment Day before the throne. When he assaults you with doubt, remember Jesus' words: "Come – you are blessed by my Father – you are righteous through me – take your inheritance, the kingdom we have prepared for you."

You can be certain of your eternal destiny. For Jesus spoke these words in Matthew ch.25 during Holy Week, not long before his death. The will of your Savior is already signed, sealed and delivered in His holy, precious blood. So... **look forward to the Last Day!**

*“Later! Later! When I have more time! I’ll think about it then!”*

*Now that might not be something voiced immediately following a sermon about Judgment Day, but how many times have spiritual priorities been put on the back burner? I have my career to think of – my responsibilities - I have to worry about the things that just have to get done! Or maybe I just want to have fun. Don't want to think of the End – I want to think about now. The Last Day is so often the **last** thing we think about!* The devil attempts to get a foothold. He tries with all his might to get us distracted. I'm sure you can relate. One day so easily melds into another, this week leads to the next, year gets added to year, and... there is so much on our plates. The sight of the Last Judgment and Jesus' return can slip from the foreground of our minds amidst the day-to-day happenings of life.

Friends: The opposite of love isn't hatred. It is apathy. When it comes to your spiritual life, apathy is deadly.

*Along with apathy, the devil uses the world to simply laugh in your face at your belief in the Truth of God's Word. This comes on the face of the newscaster with international renown. It comes in the words of the preacher who denies hell. It's printed in the novels of misled cynics who use words with such talent and sway. It's scripted into Hollywood's TV and movies. It's printed on the pages of numerous articles:*

*centuries upon centuries of arguments disputing everything about Jesus' life and death – everything about His return on the Last Day.*

We've heard God's truth today to counter those temptations. And I want you to walk away with three things: #1 Confidence. You are a child of God through faith in Jesus. #2 Focus. Keep focused on Jesus and his return, as you wait for the mercy of our Lord to bring you to eternal life. #3. Fire.

We've talked about the first two; let me explain that last one.

Let your hearts be stoked to hold out the reality of the End to others.

Really, this too relates back to the questions we've been occupied with this morning: What will the outcome be on the Last day for those I know and love? Let's not allow apathy to set in when it comes to those walking toward hell.

Shocking as it is, Hell is for real. Whose voice is heard more than anyone else's in the Bible talking about hell?

Why does Jesus spend so much time on talking about hell? He doesn't want anyone to go there! He alone – among the living – knows what it really is like!

So what causes a person to end up in hell? Jesus' words in Matthew ch.25 express: the only thing on the record for unbelievers on the Day of Judgment is their failures to fulfill God's will. Their attitude is the reverse of believers. Take a close look at their words and see what they are actually saying: "If we had known, we would have done all those good things for you, Lord." Do you see it? They have a work-righteousness attitude.

Dear Friends, the Holy Spirit stokes the fire for us – the desire to share the truth about the End:

- 🕯️ "Be merciful to those who doubt" – and – "snatch others from the fire and save them" – Jude 22-23
- 🕯️ "Encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching" – Hebrews 10:25
- 🕯️ ". . .hold on to what you have until I come," Jesus says... "Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. ... Hear what the Spirit says to the churches" – Revelation 2:25, 3:11,13
- 🕯️ "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore. Amen." – Jude vs.24-25