

The Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Trinity Sunday  
St. Matthew 25:31-46  
November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
St. Bartholomew Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC  
Fort Myers, FL  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Lord, When Did We?

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

O God, Who hast appointed a day in which Thou wilt judge the world in righteousness by that Man Who Thou hast ordained, giving assurance thereof unto all in that Thou hast raised Him from the dead: grant unto us grace, we beseech Thee, to keep in mind always the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to wait continually for His revelation from Heaven, that having boldly confessed Him before men, we also may be openly acknowledged and confessed by Him when all flesh shall appear in His presence; Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Church's year wraps up with two parables. Both the parable today and the one next Sunday, compare two contrasting groups of people. Next Sunday, we will hear about ten virgins, five wise and five foolish. Today, we hear about sheep and goats. In both parables, one group is rewarded, and the other is condemned. The Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew in his Gospel reading for today tells us the words of our Lord + Jesus in His final week on Earth. This parable today, and the one next Sunday, are both told to our Lord's hearers just a few days before He offers up His life as a ransom for the sins of the whole world, so that all those who believe on Him might have forgiveness of their sins, and enjoy eternal life with Him in Heaven, and salvation from their enemies of the devil, the world and their sinful flesh.

Our Lord's cross is His throne. This is why we place a crucifix on the center of the altar, as a reminder to us that this altar is our Lord's throne. When we come before this altar, we are approaching our Lord + Jesus. There He hangs upon the cross—upon His throne—for us to see the price of the gifts that we receive from Him. This is the throne upon which our Lord hung to redeem us back from sin and death. This is the throne upon which our Lord hung in order to win for us the gifts of forgiveness and life. He hangs upon this throne for us as a reminder of His sacrifice for us.

On the Last Day, when our Lord + Jesus comes again in His glory, He will come with all of His holy angels, and He will also sit upon His throne on that day. He will sit upon His throne of glory; the throne that He won by His death on the tree of the holy cross. From this throne He will judge all the nations. All the nations will be gathered before Him. As we heard from St. John in his revelation from the Lord + Jesus Christ on All Saints' Day, every nation and tribe, people and tongue will be gathered before Him. There will be no one that will not be gathered before Him on that Day. All nations will be judged. He will divide the nations like a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. The sheep He will place on His right hand, and the goats on His left hand.

Notice here, my dear friends, that the Lord + Jesus deals with the sheep first. He praises all of

the good works that they did in this lifetime. When He was hungry, they gave Him food; when He was thirsty, they gave Him drink; when He was a stranger, they took Him in; when He was naked, they clothed Him; when He was sick, they visited Him; when He was in prison, they went to Him. They did all of these good works. All of these things are praised by the Lord + Jesus. But notice the response of the sheep after they have been told that they have done all these good works. What is their response? They do not believe it. They say, "Lord, when did we do all these things?"

In their estimation they did not live up to the standard that the Lord God had set. What is that standard? What does our Lord God require of us? He requires perfection. He requires perfect obedience to His Law and will. The sheep are acutely aware of their failure to do what the Lord God requires. They are also very aware of their inability to not do what the Lord God forbids. They have failed in both realms. They have not done what He has commanded them to do, and they have done what He has forbidden them to do. And yet, here is the Lord + Jesus, sitting on His throne of glory praising them for doing the things that they know they did not do. How can the Lord + Jesus say these things about the sheep?

He can say this because they possess one thing: they have faith in Him. They trust in His works and merits. They believe that He has fulfilled the Law perfectly for them, and that He has paid the penalty of their sins on the throne of the cross. They cling to Him and His works. Therefore, even though all they see is their sins, and their lack of good works, the works and merits of the Christ are credited to them. They have come before the Lord's throne of glory bearing the perfect works and merits of the Christ. Their righteousness and works are HIS righteousness and works that He has given to them on account of their faith in Him.

This is how it is with us. We bear the righteousness of our Lord's works on account of our faith in Him. We are clothed with His righteousness through the waters of Holy Baptism, wherein the Holy Ghost clothed us with the works of the Christ. We have been washed clean and pure from all sins by the Holy Ghost in the waters of Holy Baptism. The Holy Ghost also continues to keep us clean through the preaching of the Gospel of our Lord + Jesus, and the through our participation in this meal of fellowship where we receive our Lord's true Body and Blood given in bread and wine for the forgiveness of our sins.

On account of this the Lord + Jesus can sit on His throne of glory and declare to us that we have done all those good works that only He has perfectly done. When we look at our lives—when we truly and honestly examine our lives—we see how little we do for our fellowman; how little we act like "good Christians." Faith in our Lord's works and merits nullifies all that. We have no reason to doubt our Lord, because He has gifted these things to us by His great love for us. Therefore, we need not fear the Last Day, because on account of faith we are made right with the Lord God—we are justified through faith in our Lord + Jesus. We will inherit the eternal Kingdom that was planned from before the foundation of the world. We will inherit an eternal life with our Lord and Savior, with all the saints who have died trusting in the Lord + Jesus.

This is not the case with the goats. They are also shocked to hear the judgment given against them. In their estimation they have lived "good lives." This is the way of all other religions in the world. And this is how one tells a false religion from the true religion, for all other religions—all false religions—requires you to do good works. This is how you prove that you are following your religion properly, by doing good works. Now you will probably say, "But Pastor are we not also supposed to do good works? Are we not supposed to obey the Law of God, even though we may fail miserably daily and often?" Yes, we are to do good works. As the Epistle of St. James teaches, this is how we show that faith is living in us. The problem that other religions have, and sadly some Christian denominations, is that they put all of the focus on good works. This causes people to trust in their good works. They begin to think that doing good works is the means by which they are saved.

This is why the goats are so shocked to discover that all their good works do not matter on the Last Day. In the eyes of the Lord + Jesus, they did not do any works. This is why we do not trust in our good works. For our good works matter not without faith. It is faith that saves, not good works. It is faith in what our Lord + Jesus has done that saves, not in what we do. Yes, we should do good works, because faith in us desires to do what our Lord would have us do, but we should never trust that our good works are the cause of our salvation. This is the way it is with the goats. They only see the works that they have done, not the works of the Christ. Therefore, on the Last Day, they will receive eternal punishment as they stand with mouths gaping open wondering how the Lord + Jesus could say that they did not do any good works. Apart from faith in the Christ, all good works do not matter.

This is why we are to not focus on our works—how little or how much we do them. We are to instead focus our eyes to our Lord + Jesus hanging on the throne of the cross. There is our salvation. It is in His perfect obedience and in His sacrifice for us that we have true and lasting salvation. On the Last Day the goats will say, “Lord, when did we not?” They never did because they did not place their trust in the cross of the Lord + Jesus. The sheep will say on that Day, “Lord, when did we?” because they know that their works are imperfect and not worthy to put before the Lord as the means by which they can find salvation. The sheep, however, will receive an eternal Kingdom, because they looked to the Christ during their time on Earth. Therefore, my dear friends, let us continue to look to the Lord + Jesus hanging on His throne of glory—His throne of the cross—and rejoice that in it all of our sins have been paid for, and through Him we have life and salvation. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who wilt come again in majesty to judge the quick and the dead, and call forth all who sleep in the graves, either to the resurrection of life or to the resurrection of condemnation: we beseech Thee to be gracious unto us, and to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, that, when we shall depart this life, we may rest in Thee, and, having been found acceptable in Thy sight, may on the Last Day be raised up to life everlasting, inherit the Kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world, and give Thee glory and praise, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*