

The sheep and the goats

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Preacher: Aaron Reeves

[0:00] A very warm welcome to you on behalf of Calvary Church. This is our pre-recorded meeting for the evening service of 18th July 2020.

For those of you who may not know me, and if this is your first time visiting us, my name is Aaron Reeves, and I'm a member of Calvary Church in Brighton, UK, and I'm a part of the preaching team there.

So we are a group of people who believe in Jesus Christ as the King of all creation, and we believe that the Christian Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God.

So in the times before the lockdown, we would meet as a church twice on Sundays, in the morning and in the evening. And so until such time that we can meet again, we have sought to provide a service that is as close to our in-person meetings as best we can with God's help.

So we have some songs that we can sing together tonight, we'll have a time of prayer, and we'll have a teaching from God's Word. So first, let's sing together. We're going to sing, Jesus is the name we honour.

[1:13] 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4 Jesus is the name we praise.

1, 2, 3, 4 Jesus is the name we praise. Jesus is the name we honour. Jesus is the name we praise. We will glorify.

We will glorify. We will lift Him high. We will give Him honour and praise.

We will glorify. We will lift Him high. We will give Him honour and praise.

[2:18] Jesus is the name we praise. Jesus is the name we worship. Jesus is the name we trust.

He is the King above all other kings. Let all creation stand and sing that Jesus is our God.

We will glorify. We will glorify. We will lift Him high. We will give Him honour and praise.

We will glorify. We will glorify. We will lift Him high. We will give Him honour and praise.

Jesus is the Father's splendor. Jesus is the Father's joy.

[3:17] He will return to reign in majesty. And every I am I shall see that Jesus is our God.

We will glorify. We will lift Him high. We will give Him honour and praise.

We will glorify. We will lift Him high. We will give Him honour and praise.

Let us know. Let us know. Let us know. Let us know. Let us know. Let us know. Let us know. Let us know. Let us know. Jesus, name above every name. Let's pray.

Father, we praise you and glorify you for the grace given to us in sending your Son, Jesus Christ.

We thank you that he took upon himself the burden of our sins.

[4:46] And we thank you that he has conquered death. We pray in gratitude for the freedom we have to worship you. And lift you tonight, all those who may not have that freedom in their society.

We pray that you would speak to them this very minute, Lord, and reinforce in them, by your Holy Spirit, the truth that they have absolute freedom in Christ.

No matter of their physical condition, Lord. We pray for our time together tonight, as a local church and as the wider church, that you would strengthen your people in these troubling times.

And equip us with your armour, dear Lord. And we lift all of these things to you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Let's sing together another song with a thank you to Philip Wells, our full-time elder, his wife Maria and Annika for their provision in the music tonight.

So let's sing, He Will Hold Me Fast. When I fear my faith will fail.

[6:13] Christ will hold me fast. When the tempter would prevail. He will hold me fast.

I could never keep my hope through thy fear for part. For my love is often cold.

He will hold me fast. He will hold me fast.

He will hold me fast. For my Savior loved me so. He will hold me fast.

He will hold me fast. Those He saves are His divine.

[7:14] Christ will hold me fast. Precious in His holy sight. He will hold me fast.

He will hold me fast. He will not let my soul be lost. His promise is God's last.

He will not let my soul be lost. He will not let my soul be lost. He will not let my soul be lost. He will not let my soul be lost. He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast, For my Savior loves me so, He will hold me fast.

For my life He bled and died, Christ will hold me fast, Justice has been satisfied, He will hold me fast.

Place with Him to endless life, He will hold me fast, Till I've laid this dirtiest night, When He comes across.

[8:45] He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast, For my Savior loves me so, He will hold me fast.

He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast, For my Savior loves me so, He will hold me fast.

Amen. So let's read together tonight's passage, and we're going to be reading from Matthew 25 verses 31 to 46.

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, And all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him, And He will separate the people, one from another, As the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

He will put the sheep on His right, And the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right, Come, You who are blessed by my Father, Take your inheritance, The kingdom prepare for you since the creation of the world.

[10:12] 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.

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. Then the righteous will answer Him, Lord, when did we see you hungry, And feed you?

Or thirsty, And give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger, And invite you in? Or needing clothes, And clothe you? When did we see you sick, Or in prison, And go to visit you?

The King will reply, Truly I tell you, Whatever you did for one of the least of these, Brothers and sisters of mine, You did for me.

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.

[11:16] For I was hungry, And you gave me nothing to eat. I was thirsty, And you gave me nothing to drink. 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. 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?

He will reply, Truly I tell you, Whatever you did not do, For one of the least of these, You did not do for me. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, But the righteous to eternal life.

Amen. So now we come to the teaching part of our service tonight, And we'll pick up from where John Woods left off last week, And God willing, we can fill in some blanks, And just refresh our minds on this very important text.

Let's just pray for God's word. Lord in heaven, we pray for the preaching of your word tonight. We pray that you would give us ears to hear, And we pray for the turning of many hearts to our Lord Jesus Christ.

[12:37] In his name we ask. Amen. So our teaching tonight is going to be in three parts. We're going to set the scene. So we'll have a quick look at the whens and wheres of the text.

And then we'll step through the story, Paying particular attention to all the people and the characters involved. And then we'll draw some conclusions on what we've read and what we've seen.

So chapter 24 opens with Jesus talking to his disciples. Jesus goes on to accurately predict the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, Which happens some 40 years later.

Judea at that time was under Roman occupation from about 6 AD until 66 AD, Where many tax related tensions and protests led to the Jewish rebels overcoming the Roman garrison that was there at the time.

And Jewish rebels reclaimed the territory and drove the Romans out. But in 70 AD, under the direction of Emperor Titus, The Romans came back and they besieged Jerusalem and then proceeded to destroy it completely, including the temple.

[14:01] So the discourse that follows this text in chapter 24, As Jesus talks to his disciples, Builds a picture, not just the things to come in Jerusalem in the near future, But it also gazes ahead at the things planned for the nations of the world, Up until the very time that Jesus comes back.

This period is marked with certain events that must take place, Namely a time of great tribulation. Verse 21 in chapter 24 says, There will be an unequalled and great distress.

Here are some of the other elements that are to unfold. Chapter 24 verse 9, There will be persecution of people who follow Jesus.

Verse 12 says, The wickedness will continue to increase. 24, Deception by people who claim to be the Messiah, that is Jesus.

29, There will be great cosmic disturbances. 30, Finally, Finally, The return of Jesus with his angels, And with the power to gather up his people.

[15:25] And in 36, We read that the time of this event, When Jesus returns, Is completely unknown. So this is a time of great trouble for all people.

We're also told in 24 verse 13 and 14, Those who follow Jesus, Standing firm to the end, Will be saved. And the end will not come until the gospel, That is the good news of Jesus Christ conquering death, Has been taken to the whole world.

Those things must take place. And so the warning, The warning, Excuse me, From Jesus in these chapters, Is to his followers, To be on their guard against deception, And to stand firm, In these times of tribulation.

So we know there will come an end, To this world, As we know it. The common thought, At least in the West, Is that when the world ends, It will simply be a mass extinction.

There's plenty of films, Out there that depict this. And just an end, To all consciousness. But that's not the reality. So the reality is, The world as we know it, Will come to an end, When Jesus comes back.

[16:42] And at that point, It's not that we, Will simply cease to exist. Instead, We'll stand before Jesus, And give an account of our life. As what we see in our verses tonight, In chapter 25, Is a reality of that moment.

This is a snapshot, Of events, That will occur, On Jesus' return. Now these verses, 31 to 46, Follow two parables.

So you may hear, These verses being referred to, As the parable, Of the sheep and the goats. Now a parable, Is usually a, Fictitious story, Used to describe an idea.

These verses, Don't strictly adhere, To that definition, Because the story itself, Has, A framework of real events, And those are set up, In verses 31 and 32.

But it does also, Have parabolic elements, Such as sheep, And goats. And even the flow, Of conversation, I imagine, Won't, Take place, In this exact way.

[17:50] But it's more designed, To make specific points. So if we were to, Overview, The verses that we have, This evening.

What would we say about them? We could say that, Like the previous parables, They're about action. Doing, And not doing.

They're about two groups of people, That are similar, But not the same. As are, Sheep and goats. And most importantly, They are about, The end times.

The last day. When all people in history, Will stand before the king, In judgment. So let's step through the story, With a focus, On the characters.

Here are, Our characters, In order of appearance. We have the son of man, Verse 31, Angels, Also verse 31, Verse 32, We have all the nations, And the people, The sheep, And the goats, Make an appearance, In verse 32, And 33, The king, In 34, The least of the people, That are Jesus' brothers, And sisters, This is verse 40, The devil, And his angels, In verse 41, So we're going to, Step through, Each of those characters, As we go through the text, Take a look at those, So verse 31, Opens with Jesus, Talking about, The son of man, So what can we, Understand about this person, From this text, Daniel, In the old testament, Had a vision of the future, Some 600 years earlier, In which he referred to someone, Called the son of man, Daniel 7, Says this from verse 13,

[19:49] In my vision at night, I looked, And there before me, Was one like, A son of man, Coming with the clouds of heaven, He approached the ancient of days, And was led into his presence, He was given authority, Glory, And sovereign power, All nations and peoples, Of every language, Worshipped him, His dominion, Is an everlasting dominion, That will not pass away, And his kingdom, Is one that will never, Be destroyed, We know that Jesus, Referred to himself, As son of man, Notably after he was betrayed, By Judas, And arrested, The high priest of the Jewish leaders, Asked Jesus, This is Mark 14, 61 to 62, Are you the Messiah, The son of the blessed one?

Verse 62, I am, Said Jesus, And you will see, The son of man, Sitting at the right hand, Of the mighty one, And coming, On the clouds of heaven, So these passages, Both point forwards, To this end of days, This last day, And the return of Jesus, The son of man, As king, Of heaven and earth, Verse 31 says, That he comes, In his glory, Which would be something, Of his divine nature, And qualities, Meaning, Meaning this will be something, Incredible, To see, And experience, It would definitely, Not be like, Anything anybody's ever seen before, This will be something, Incredibly unique, He will have his angels, With him, Which are messengers of God, Created by God, Uniquely to serve, His purpose, So there is again, That image of,

Jesus' total authority, Over heavens and earth, So we know that Jesus, Is the son of man, And he will come again, With an everlasting kingdom, Great power, And be present, On a throne, And so when we see this character, Of the king, In verse 34, We know, That the son of man, And the king, Are the same person, The king will always sit, On a throne, So Jesus, Sits down, On his glorious throne, In verse 32, We see all the nations, Before him, We then see all the people, Of the nations, Separated out, Like a shepherd, Would separate, Sheep from goats, All the nations, Being in context, The whole world, As we heard in 24, 14, Which says, And this gospel, Of the kingdom, Will be preached, In the whole world, As a testimony,

To all nations, And then, The end will come, So let's take in, The scale, Of this scene, What we have here, On the last day, Is every person, In the world, But not, At just a frozen point, In time, This is, Every person, That ever existed, Called, Before the king, Of the heavens, And the earth, Who is on his throne, 2 Corinthians 5, 10, Says this, For we must all, Appear, Before the judgment seat, Of Christ, So that each of us, May receive, What is due us, For the things done, While in the body, Whether good, Or bad, So can you imagine, The size, Of this event, I remember, Going to a rock festival, Once, And there was something, Like 70,000 people there, People as far, As the eye could see, Fields, And fields, And people, And only one ice cream band, But it's not,

A speck, Compared, To what it would be like, At the return of Jesus, When all people, Whoever lived, Standing before him, So back to verse 32, Jesus here, Is likened to a shepherd, As we've seen before, And in the same way, A shepherd, Has sheep, And cares for them, So Jesus has his people, John 10, 14 to 16, Says this, I am the good shepherd, I know my sheep, And my sheep know me, Just as the father knows me, And I know the father, See if we take what Jesus said in that verse, And we place it in the context, Of the text that we're looking at tonight, On the last day, You can't help, But be in awe, Of Jesus, And his power, Every person, That's ever existed, Is standing before him, And he says, I know each one of you, Intimately, I know all of your deeds, [24:43] Done in the body, And I know, If you're mine, Or if you're not, And we know that there's more, Than just the sheep, That's standing

before the king, As we've seen in the text, There are the goats too, So why would a shepherd, Separate them out?

Well, They are similar, Sheep and goats, But they're definitely not the same, Sheep are very passive, They are grazers, They'll eat at ground level, And, They're generally rounded up, With relative ease, By an experienced shepherd, But goats, But goats, Are just the opposite, They'll browse, For food actively, And they'll nibble, At just about everything, That they come across, but a defining trait for goats which has long been understood is their stubbornness there's a great example of this on youtube if you go to the youtube search bar and you type goats on a jeep you'll come across a video of two goats named huck and shirley that have climbed on top of their uh their owner's rather nice looking black jeep and no matter how much the owner tried and shouted and instructed them to get down the goats just wouldn't do it in the end he had to grab them pull them down by hand because they just wouldn't listen and straight away huck and shirley jumped right back onto the jeep again this is classic youtube so the shepherd will separate out these two creatures because ultimately the stubborn ones will just do their own thing they have no care for the master's commands jesus says at the end of days this is how it will be with people the people who know jesus the people who want to be with him and follow him will go to the lord's right side and the people who don't know jesus those who have chosen not to listen to him and not to follow him will go to his left so what happens if you're with the king well the people on his right in verse 34 are blessed by god and will enter into the king's kingdom and this is their inheritance and jesus even goes further and gives some reasoning behind that decision by calling up his believers activities he cites examples of all the times his people interacted with him personally he says 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 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 but jesus followers they don't recall these good deeds and they raise this question when did we do this for you the king gives an astonishing answer he says whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine you did for me jesus knows and can recall every deed you have ever done the king is not passive to these things he cares about how you live your life the example that he gives he refers to how his sheep respond to a specific group of people that jesus calls the least of these brothers and sisters of mine and he says amazingly whatever you do for these people you do directly for me which is a mind-bending thing to say isn't it so it's very important that we take some time to look at this group of people so what is it to be least well the word used is a superlative of the word used for small which is not to say specifically in size but maybe weaker in

certain characteristics maybe a person is least socially is lonely and needs friends maybe a person is least financially and needs food maybe they are least in health and need looking after this is the least of which group of people jesus goes on to draw a direct connection between himself and the least and these least people by saying these least i'm referring to are my brothers and sisters so who are jesus brothers and sisters matthew 12 46 to 50 says this while jesus was still talking to the crowd his mother and brothers stood outside wanting to speak to him someone told him your mother and brothers are standing outside wanting to speak to you he replied to him who is my mother and who are my brothers pointing to his disciples he said here are my mother and brothers for whoever does the will of my father in heaven is my brother and sister and my mother i'm sure that anybody who's listening to this message will know what it's like to love someone to the point when something happens to them that's not very nice you can feel it too everybody has experienced that at some point it's a strange feeling the amazing thing here is that jesus the king of all creation is saying i so care for my people that they are as family to me and when you serve them you served me and i know every inch of that service centimeter if you're outside the uk and jesus does not have any problem with aligning himself with the the suffering and the poor here in this vision of the things to come on the last day or this picture of the things to come on the last day when all people are called before the king everything is laid down before him nothing can be hidden and for his people he recounts all the good things that were done for him and the believers response was i don't recall that because the true follower of christ isn't keeping a record to increase their reward instead their deeds come from a changed heart and a changed mind a heart wanting to follow jesus and live out his commandment to love one another daily this isn't to say that doing good things give you the golden ticket into heaven it says you have to know the king and have a heart for him in john 3 verse 3 jesus says this very truly i tell you no one can see the kingdom of god unless

they are born again when you make a commitment to follow Jesus there is a very real and significant change of heart that God causes to occur by sending His Holy Spirit to live with us in our lives now He transforms you and helps you to understand His will Jesus speaks of this in John 14 verse 26 He says but the Advocate the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name will teach you all the things I have said to you and will remind you of everything I have said to you Ezekiel 11 verse 19 God says this of His people I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh so we can be very clear on the King's reasoning because although on the surface it looks like His people are led into the kingdom based on their actions it's actually a matter of where their heart is and then from verse 41 we have what is almost an inversion of everything that we've just read it's really quite sad verse 41 says that the open door into the kingdom for the followers of the King is closed for those who do not choose to follow Him instead it's replaced by the command to leave His presence note also in verse 34 that those on the King's right are blessed by the Father whereas in verse 41 the people on the King's left are cursed but also notice in verse 41 the Father is not attributed to the curse suggesting that the curse is actually a result of the person's own choice so where do the people go who don't follow the King well if you're not following the King into the kingdom the only other place to go is outside of the kingdom which the Bible describes as a place which is completely and eternally absent of good there's no good thing outside of the kingdom in Matthew 8 verse 12 it's noted as darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth meaning that this is a place of sorrow and anger it's also often described as a place of eternal fire as is featured in our text here but let's note that this verse also tells us that this eternal place was prepared for the devil and his angels or the more familiar term for the angels these days would be demons and so this place was never really intended for humans which is why it would be such a curse for anybody to end up there we were never intended to be so far from God's presence and from our King as we move on through the verses we see a great accusation of neglect come upon this group of people the goats as Jesus says for I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat

I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink 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 much like the sheep the goats are perplexed as to when they have not met the needs of Jesus in these circumstances or even met Him at all to which we get the reply truly I tell you whatever you did not do for one of the least of these you did not do for me notice the absence of the term brothers and sisters in this parallel text commentators have noted that that may be down to those outside of a personal relationship with Jesus being able to understand the depths of what it means to be part of that family to be brothers and sisters

[37:17] I would have to agree that could well be the case but in any sense we know this the people on the King's left are found guilty in their neglect and lack of love for those who belong to Jesus because of their inaction finally verse 46 all people go on to eternity for the goats this is described as punishment which stands to reason in a place that is absent of any goodness and for the sheep they go on to life that's life in the kingdom well I hope that makes some sense and brings our text a little bit more into focus let's close by establishing two points from our text to equip us for our week ahead point one would be sheep and goats look similar but they're not the same in this text we see two groups of creatures that may be indistinguishable from a distance but on closer inspection we see a massive difference the sheep were found to be serving the Lord their natural inclination was kindness and love for the King's people because of their changed hearts the goats however were inactive and they were neglectful to the King's people they had no real desire to even serve the King because their hearts were not with Him it's no side note or small detail when Jesus says the least of these my brothers and sisters

Jesus is saying that when you neglect or mistreat His people you're neglecting Him you're mistreating Him and if that develops into an ongoing day-to-day habit if there's no love if there's no compassion or forgiveness for the people of Jesus and Jesus is clear you're not serving Him and this calls for a deep inspection of our own actions an evaluation of where our own hearts are the

