

Christ the King Sits On His Throne of Judgement

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 November 2017

Preacher: Matt Cyr

[0:00] with Billy Nye, my comrade. And this passage from Matthew 25, starting in verse 31, is a very significant passage that I'm excited for us to look at today.

Okay. We know from our experience that our lives are full of future events for which we must plan. When we're young, oftentimes it seems like the events that are most necessary to plan for are those coming in the immediate future. When I was in fifth and sixth grade, eight o'clock in the morning at school, recess was the big thing to plan ahead for.

So while our teacher was writing the lessons on the board with her back to us, we were passing around a sheet to choose our soccer teams. So we knew that if we spent time during class picking our teams, that meant we had more time during recess kicking the soccer ball.

We were preparing for the next big thing. Then along comes high school and all of a sudden everybody's talking about college. It's approaching and so the way that you have to respond is by preparing for it.

[1:28] You take the SAT and the ACT. You start narrowing down your list of schools. You apply to the schools. You apply for scholarships. You go and take tours of the schools and you try and figure out what's the best fit for what you want to study.

But after a while you realize that college itself is just one big planning session for the next thing, right? It's preparing for a job. It's preparing to have a career and kind of to go out into the real world. Probably at college you're looking for someone to spend the rest of your life with and you're looking to build a network of friends and acquaintances so that you can kind of navigate this life.

Well then at some point maybe the big pieces start falling into place for us. We get married. We have a couple kids and a Labrador.

Buy a house. Planning becomes different, right? Now it's looking at retirement. Am I going to have enough money? How do I save and invest and plan accordingly to the day when I stop working?

[2:32] Or maybe it's saving your pennies for an entire year just to take that vacation for your family that you're really excited about. We're expert planners, aren't we?

We plan for things our whole life. We're really good at it. Everything from what's for dinner to what career is right for us to maybe even what socks we're going to wear the next day.

Well throughout the Olivet Discourse, Matthew chapters 24 and 25, Jesus has been speaking of one event that all of us better make sure we're ready for.

Of course we're talking about the return of Jesus Christ. He's coming back. And one of the questions that Matthew has been proposing to us through this discourse of Jesus is, are you prepared?

Are you ready? Are you making the necessary adjustments and corrections and preparations today for that day? One of the questions as Mike has been walking us through this the last few weeks that's come into my mind is, how much effort am I putting towards that day?

[3:43] Sure, I'm anticipating it. I believe it's true, but how am I living in light of that day? What am I doing differently today that might show that I'm actually joyfully anticipating Jesus coming back, that I might be with him forever?

Well sadly we've seen throughout these chapters that some will spend a lifetime prepping for epic parties and fail to prepare for that day.

When Jesus comes back, when Jesus comes back they will be devastated because they did not make preparations. But for Christians, for those who are following Jesus and seeking to honor him with all of our lives, we love his appearance, right?

We're anticipating and we're longing for that day. And so Matthew's been telling us through the Holy Spirit, plan accordingly. Make preparations.

So we've seen there should be no surprises. Jesus has told us clearly. In the future he's coming back. We see that there's going to be people come and try and lead others astray.

[4:47] False Christs. False prophets. But don't go astray after them because his appearing will be evident to everybody. And most importantly, in the last chapter and a half, we've been seeing over and over that the call is to be ready.

It's equivalent to being faithful. Being about the master's business while he's away so that when he comes back he will find us doing what he has called us to do. That's the wisdom of Scripture.

It says that the return of Jesus is the one event that you best not fail to plan for. Because all of human history is coming to a head on that day.

Doesn't mean we ignore retirement savings or career planning or family trips. But all of it must be done with an eye towards that day.

Jesus is coming back. We must plan accordingly. Well, our text today could be titled, You Must Be Ready, Part 3.

[5:55] Of course, two weeks ago Mike sort of gave us this urgent appeal to say, hey, you just got to be ready. That's the fact of the matter. Be ready for that day. And then last week, Jesus tells these four parables that illustrate a little bit of how.

How is one to be ready? Don't be dismayed by a delay. Make sure you're faithful. Take risks for the kingdom of God. And now this passage we come to essentially can answer, be ready because judgment is coming.

Be ready because judgment is coming. So here's, let me try and capture what this passage is telling us in one statement. And then we'll read it together and take a look.

On judgment day, your response to King Jesus will be made clear by your treatment of his disciples in need today.

On judgment day, when Jesus comes back and gathers all the nations before him. Your response to him, whether you received his gospel, whether you put your faith in him and found eternal life in him or not, will be made clear by how you treat his disciples today.

[7:16] Let's read this passage together. Matthew 25, 31 to 46.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 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.

And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on his left. 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.

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. I was naked and you clothed me.

I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me. Then the righteous will answer him saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you drink?

[8:27] And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? 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.

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.

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?

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. And these will go away into eternal punishment.

[9:32] But the righteous into eternal life. This is the word of God. Well, we're just going to follow this text and we're going to follow the outline of it today.

It's kind of four parts. We're going to spend most of our time on the first two. First, we see an overview of the setting of the judgment scene, followed by two conversations. One with Jesus and the righteous.

One with Jesus and the cursed. And then there's just one summarizing verse at the end. Let's jump right in. First thing we need to see from verses 31 to 33 is this, that Jesus will sit in judgment over all people.

I love the first word of this passage. When. It's not an if or a perhaps or a maybe. This is a sure thing that the son of man is coming back.

And again, we need to remember that this is a call to faithfulness. There's a sense of urgency in these words. There's marching orders for those who follow Jesus today.

[10:41] There's work to do, right? Kingdom work. Service for Jesus' sake. There's disciples to make. There's lives to see transformed by the gospel.

When Jesus comes, will he find you going about kingdom business? It's a when, not an if. He is coming back. So, the first thing that we see when we start looking with a little more detail at these verses is that Jesus is the focal point of this entire scene.

The first three verses, just notice all the references to him. When the son of man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glory's throne.

Before him will be gathered all the nations and he will separate people. And he will place the sheep on his right but the goats on the left. And on and on and on. Now, it's not primarily about the judgment itself, the angels, the throngs of people.

But every detail here is heightening the glory and majesty of King Jesus. We see this glory that in the book of Revelation there will be myriads and myriads and thousands and thousands of angels.

[11:54] Gathered around the throne of the Lamb, singing praise forever and ever to Jesus. For he alone is worthy. For he alone is worthy of all honor and glory.

And it's a royal glory. This is a king coming to sit on a throne and rule forever. This throne has a reserved sign on it. Reserved for the God-man, Jesus Christ.

He, of course, is uniquely able to sit on that throne and judge all people. Because he lived a perfectly righteous life. He's the fulfillment of the law and the prophets.

He's the prophesied Messiah. He is Emmanuel, God with us. He is the one who gives his life as a ransom for many.

Verse 32, we see that the Son of Man is going to sit and he's going to separate people one from another. Just like a shepherd would separate goats from sheep.

[12:56] But this separation of King Jesus is not one of animals but of people in its judgment language. Jesus is dividing all of humanity from day one until the final day into two groups.

The righteous and the wicked. All the nations, did you see that, are gathered before him. Each individual human being who's ever lived.

Mother Teresa and Gandhi, Mike Ditka and the 85 Bears, Michael Phelps, Michael Jordan, Jimmy Carter, Napoleon Bonaparte, the unnamed soldier buried at Arlington. All people from everywhere. There's no gray area. There's not three groups. There's not five groups. They're not divided by religion.

Say, well, the best half from this religion go in and the best half from that religion go in. And you guys who were just kind of nice people but didn't really have any God, you go in. You guys who are mean, you're out.

[13:58] It's not that. There's two groups. You see that each and every person is having a reckoning. And there's one who separates. There's one who judges.

Jesus Christ. It's all about him. Though there's two groups, each person in both groups has responded one way or another to Jesus. That's what's going on.

He is the one to whom we all must give account. Make no mistake, friends, your eternity depends on your response to him. No matter what might be the popular opinion of our day and age.

Are you living for him? Are you ordering your life around King Jesus? For one day when he comes back, all is going to be disclosed. Will be found out.

For the Christian, this is really good news. Here we have the scene of judgment and Jesus separating people. And there's this great welcome to one group and this judgment to another.

[14:59] Well, if we're blood bought, if we've responded to the gospel and put our faith and our trust in Jesus. And this is really good news.

Because this is the day we're waiting for. This is the day when Jesus comes back.

And writes every wrong. Judges every action. By his perfect righteousness and law. And receives those who have been longing for his appearance.

The one who sits in judgment has bought your life, Christian, with his own blood. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

But for the non-Christian, this scene should fill you with dread. The king is coming back and it's going to be like a thief. You cannot prepare yourself in any way other than reckoning with Jesus.

And if you do not seek his mercy today and settle accounts with him, he will not deal kindly with you on that day. Jesus is going to sit in judgment over all people.

[16:06] And he is going to settle accounts with each and every one of us based upon our response to him. When we move now to the second part of this passage.

This is by far the longest and most difficult part of the text to work through and to get right. But let's see what we can do.

This is part two. King Jesus welcomes the righteous into eternal life. We see this in verses 34 to 40. Right up front notice that the language has changed.

The identifier is no longer the son of man but the king. The king is now starting to talk to the sheep on his right.

This shouldn't surprise us. Anybody who is familiar with Daniel chapter 7. Because one like the son of man comes and God from the throne gives him an eternal dominion and rule over all the nations.

[17:19] The king language is very, very appropriate for Jesus. So the king issues a welcome. Come. Come. Inherit the kingdom.

Notice what kind of kingdom. Not a flash in the pan. Not a sort of put something together at the last minute for you guys. It's been around from the beginning.

So when Genesis 1.1 reads, In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Jesus is saying that way back then, the father had a kingdom prepared for his people. This is a very kind and generous God.

Well who does Jesus welcome? This is part one of what gets really tricky about this passage. Notice what is said in verse 34.

Come you who are blessed by my father. This is grace language. It does not say, you'll notice, Come you who have worked really hard and earned your salvation.

[18:31] Here's your wage. You get to come into the kingdom. You've been really nice to other people and you've kind of helped the poor out. So come on in. You who are blessed by my father.

Receive your inheritance. The thing about inheritance is, Is that you don't earn them. You don't work for something that is not yours.

In order to obtain it from your parents. The heir is not earning the inheritance of his or her parents. Because of his efforts.

It is through a relationship. It is no different with salvation. We are not working our way to the kingdom of God.

We are banking on God's mercy. We are expecting him to provide a way for sinners who are banished from his presence to be made right with him. You who are blessed by my father.

[19:38] King Jesus says. Because we know, right, that if God doesn't act to rescue us. None of us expect anything on that day but judgment.

Jesus is here speaking to those who have been graciously adopted into the family of God. Bought by the blood of Christ.

Shed at Calvary on the cross. That's why they're blessed. Because God has saved them. So, of course, then the obvious question becomes.

How come, if God has saved them and they've done nothing to earn this. That Jesus then turns and immediately starts talking about how they've treated other people.

Right? See that starting in verse 35. Jesus issues the welcome. And 34 and then 35 says. Because this is why. Here's my explanation for why you're welcome here. And it's all about treatment of other people.

[20:38] How can Jesus talk like that if I've just said that he's about grace? Because this whole thing is intended to shape how we live today.

It's to reframe our thinking. It's to call us into a particular mode of discipleship that seeks to have compassionate care on the people around us. And a particular group of people.

Which we'll see in a little bit. Matthew's gospel is not the primary place where any of us would go to sort of learn about justification by faith.

That's Romans. That's Paul. That's maybe 1 Peter. But Matthew is really, really good at saying if you follow Jesus, here's how you live today. That's what's going on.

Here's how you live today. Matthew is full of both expectations to personal righteousness.

[21:37] He calls hatred the equivalent of murder. He calls lust the equivalent of adultery. And says be holy for I am holy. Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect.

But then also it's full of obligations towards fellow believers and even towards enemies. You've heard it said love your neighbor, hate your enemy. I tell you, love your enemy. Pray for those who persecute you.

There's tons and tons of information in Matthew's gospel how we should live today. In light of that day. In light of the return of Jesus. That's why this judgment exists in our Bible.

It's to show followers of Jesus how to live. We're not saved by works. But we are saved for works. We do good now as we wait Jesus' return.

Notice this list and what it contains. There's verses 35 and 36. The hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, naked, in prison, and sick. And Jesus says, you cared for me.

[22:45] Earlier in Matthew's gospel, we've seen Jesus regularly promise that those who have a need, who are prioritizing his kingdom, will see their needs met by their father.

It shows up in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew chapter 6. Jesus says, do not be anxious about your life, what you'll eat, or drink, or wear. Hungry, thirsty, naked.

In our passage. Don't be anxious. Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you. Prioritize God's kingdom, Christian. Because God will provide for your needs.

He says the same thing to his disciples. He sends them out to the lost sheep of Israel in chapter 10. God will provide for your needs. Don't take silver and gold.

A laborer deserves his wages. The people you go to, to serve, and to administer the kingdom to, they owe you. Let them pay your way.

[23:44] And if they don't, kick off the dust of your sandals. Go on to the next town, but make sure they know the kingdom of heaven has come near. And on the day of judgment, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah. Because from the time of Jesus to his return, you're not just rejecting sort of an initial revelation of God.

You're rejecting the full revelation of Jesus himself and his kingdom. This list, of course, is not an exhaustive list. It's not meant to be a checklist.

So, for Christians, okay, well, let's see. If I see somebody hungry, okay, got it. Thirsty, got it.

Somebody needs a dollar, okay, got it. No, but it represents this idea of compassionate care.

Any deeds of compassion that we can do for others. It's not a checklist, but a diagnostic for the heart. It's my heart postured towards compassionately caring for the needs of others.

I find it so amazing that the king says that these folks on his right have shown him compassion.

Notice how the righteous respond in verse 37.

[25:03] They're shocked. What are you talking about? Lord, when did we see you? When were you hungry and we gave you anything to eat? When were you thirsty and we gave you drink?

When were you in prison? They're surprised and confused. Rightly so. Because they were not, the king was not sort of traipsing around in need.

Kings typically don't have much need. But notice what the king responds. In verse 40. Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.

Now we got to make sure we get this one of the least of these my brothers right. There's a lot of rides on it. Right?

This is the criteria that Jesus is saying, here's the evidence that I'm using to judge all people. Right? So the typical way that we would understand this and large scale movements of caring for the poor and homeless ministry and prison ministry and all this other stuff, large scale movements, have been based on this passage.

[26:18] Now I'm not saying anything about the goodness of those things. They're right and they're good. But I will say this passage doesn't give us justification for those things.

Matthew has been using my brothers in a particular way throughout his gospel. And it's important that we see it so we know who he's talking about. So turn back to chapter 12. The very end of chapter 12, starting in verse 46.

There's two ways that this word can be used. Fortunately, we get to see both of them in this passage. First, brother in the biological sense. I'm an only child, so I don't have any brothers, but some of you do have biological kin.

It's one way. The other way is to make a spiritual family connection. So 12, 46 to 50. Listen to this. While Jesus was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and brother stood outside and asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, who is my mother and who are my brothers?

[27:31] Stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, here are my mother and my brothers. Verse 50. Here it is. Here's the definition as we should understand it in Matthew 25.

Verse 40. For whoever does the will of my father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother. You see that? Jesus isn't identifying all of humanity as his brothers and sisters and family. He's particularly interested in the care of those who are doing the will of his father.

That's his brothers. And he's particularly, particularly concerned with even one of the least of these, his brothers. Those who are prioritizing the kingdom and on mission for Jesus who are in need. That's the group Jesus has in mind. This is family language. How can Jesus relate and equate a response to the least as care for him?

[28:49] That's what's so amazing about this. Not that Jesus says if you care for other people who are poor, you get into heaven. But that when you care for the least of my followers, the ones doing the will of my father, you do it for me.

He so closely identifies with his people that there's no separation on judgment day between care for God's people and care for God.

Service to the least of his brothers is service to the king. In other words, as Jesus has already said earlier in this gospel, whoever receives you receives me.

Whoever receives me receives him who sent me. Or if you like, truly I tell you, even if you give a cup of cold water to one of these because he is a disciple, you will not lose your reward.

Jesus is personally committed to those who are his people. His brothers and sisters. His disciples. His disciples. And he calls his people to be equally as committed to one another.

[30:04] Why the need? Should we just sort of take a political stance on this and say, well, those who are in need should just kind of do more for themselves. No, that's not.

He's not getting into any of those political weeds whatsoever. But he's saying, hey, these folks, one of the least of these, my brothers, they're committed to the kingdom. They're on mission for me. We saw in the parable of the talents, there's some who have been given just immense material resources, immense networks of people and resources and the like.

Some are not. Disciples who have are to be God's means to provide for the disciples in need. God's community cares for each other.

That's at the heart of what this judgment is saying to Christians today. Jesus is present with us in a real sense.

And he takes it personally when we care for one another. So our treatment of disciples in need, whether they're fellow church members who just lost a job and are hungry or need some provision of transportation or a ride to the hospital.

[31:25] Whether they just need somebody to sit and listen to them. Or whether it's disciples in need far, far away. Missionaries and the third world church and those who are being persecuted for the gospel.

Jesus says our treatment of all of these is evidence not just of a kindness or some natural compassionate disposition.

But it's evidence of our posture towards him. Because these folks are advancing his kingdom and his purposes and his mission. So we ought to be behind them and support them. Any way possible. We see that we are not here earning a spot in heaven through these works. We're not working for our inheritance. But what it does teach us is how we should care for God's people while we're here. While we're waiting for our king. Jesus takes it personally. Because each and every disciple in need belongs to and is loved by the king.

[32:36] We shouldn't be surprised by this. It shows up very plainly in 1 John 4 verse 20. Listen to this. John writes, 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. And here's the commandment. Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Across the board. No qualifications in that statement. Believers are to love believers. Through thick and thin to the end. Jesus is coming back and he's going to take it personal.

Much more briefly the last two parts. Jesus has invited the righteous in. We've seen his glory seated on this throne.

And judging the nations. And now he turns to the cursed in verse 41. All those in the second group. King Jesus banishes to eternal punishment.

[33:47] With equal authority as with the welcome and invitation. King Jesus commands the cursed to depart. Notice not just from this place.

Not just, you know, don't come around here no more. It's depart from me. Their life source is telling them that he's done with them.

It's tragic. From beginning to end we see Jesus remaining focus of this passage. He's still center stage.

And the judgment he renders is one of everlasting consequences. Sadly, it's to a place never intended for them. It was meant for the devil and his angels.

The kingdom news, the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ was there out. And they rejected the message along with the king. The only evidence needed to support that judgment is that they rejected and failed to serve the king's people.

[35:05] They lacked compassion for disciples who were carrying with them the message of the kingdom. They lacked compassion for kingdom messengers, for the king's ambassadors.

In 42 and 43 we see that in doing so they failed to receive and care for the king. They rejected Jesus.

That's what is being said here. It's not they just weren't nice to people and so now they're in hell. It's they rejected King Jesus through failing to care for his people with compassion and love.

Surely there's different sort of partitions of this group. Some would just be apathetic and Jesus stuff, okay.

Others compounded and confounded the needs of the saints. Some persecuted and are persecuting the disciples. Some are just taking delight in the suffering of Christians.

[36:04] But all, no matter what part of that number, all rejected the king when they did nothing to care for his disciples' needs.

Well, the cursed are just as surprised as the righteous. They don't recall missing opportunities to care for Jesus. And I imagine they're surprised something along these lines.

Oh, good king, certainly if I had seen you in need, I would have cared for you. Certainly, king, you seated on this throne with all these angels surrounding you.

Certainly, I would have cared for you if I had seen your need. Right? It's easy to have that response when the king of glory is before you. It's really hard to, by faith, believe that when you're caring for his people, you're caring for him.

But the lowly kingdom messengers were despised and sent out. Jesus took it personal. Truly is more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for those who have rejected the Messiah and his kingdom and his messengers.

[37:15] Well, the text wraps up in verse 46 with the summary. And these cursed will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

That's the reality. The judgment has been rendered. Let me try and wrap this up.

On that day, all people will stand before Jesus. Some people will have been shown to respond favorably to Jesus.

They've received him by way of receiving his people. They've cared for the needs of God's people. And Jesus has said, that is the proof that you love me.

That's the proof that you follow me. That your life is aligned with mine. That you're part of my kingdom. Others will be shown to have rejected him through their lack of care for his people.

[38:23] The evidence in this account is how we've treated the disciples in need. Because of what message they bring with them.

The good news of the gospel of the kingdom. So as you're planning today for Jesus' return. Readiness is caring for the needs of fellow disciples.

Faithfulness is linking arms with and advancing the king's mission together with other Christians. This is the call to all of us who are part of the family of God.

Care for each other. Because Jesus takes it personally. You've aligned with the king, Christian. Now care for his family. Three points of application to close.

First of all, think. The disciple in need is a brother or sister to care for with compassion. That's the mindset that we have to have. That that disciple, that one over there struggling with whatever it may need.

[39:36] Is a brother or sister that Jesus loves deeply. And I want to care for them. I want to love them like Jesus loves them. Number one is think.

Number two is act. Make personal effort to care for God's people in their need. I think it can be easy as part of the church.

Sometimes kind of sit back and go, well, I'm tithing my money. And I'm giving to the church fund. And the church is doing this great ministry and awesome. But here Jesus is speaking to individual people.

Make personal effort to care for God's people in their need. With your money or your time or your transportation. Your job networking. And make sure as you do, we treat each other as family. Not as projects. Not as sort of people that need help. They're brothers. They're sisters. They're mothers. Finally, identify with.

[40:40] We follow a crucified king. With whom we've aligned our lives. And that king calls us to stand with the downtrodden.

With the persecuted. With those hated by the world for the sake of Jesus. And because of his name. We must stand together with those in need.

As disciples of Jesus, we move toward the needs of our brothers and sisters. Always. We do it because we love each other. And when we do it, we realize that we're serving Jesus.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, you are good.

Thank and praise you for not judging us according to our deeds. For their filthy rags. But you have had mercy on us, Lord.

[41:46] And I pray that today you would help us to live ready for the return of Jesus. And that we would love one another and care deeply for the needs of your people.

Today and every day until you come back, Jesus. Help us do that with faith and faithfully. In Christ's name, amen. God bless you to sit in death.

Amen. True. Well, the truth is, Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.