

The Parables

The Sheep and the Goats, Matthew 25:31-46

January 31, 2016

When I first came back to Jesus as a young adult, I began listening to Christian music for the first time.

- I'm a product of the 80's, so check out the best choices I had at the time:
 - Amy Grant
 - Michael W. Smith
 - Brian Duncan
 - White Heart
 - Petra
 - Randy Stonehill
- And I distinctly remember cringing at half the tunes they put out, but disciplining myself to endure, for the sake of detoxing myself from AC/DC, Guns 'n Roses, Def Leppard, and so on...
- I was a classic rock kinda guy, and at the time, Christian Music only played the new stuff.
 - KLOVE was brand new, no radio alternatives, and cassette tapes were still the rage.
 - So I'd go to the Christian bookstore and sit with headphones and listen to bands
 - All I had to judge them by were their album covers...
- **(Start the song from Kyle's iPhone)**
- I don't remember how I found him, but I was soon introduced to **Keith Green**.
 - Keith was most definitely 70's, but his stuff was so good, and on the piano, so...
 - He had a profound influence on my Christian walk.
 - One song in particular: The Sheep and the Goats
 - More on Keith Green a bit later... **(fade out)**
 - For now, let's pray and read from Matthew 25...

Part 3 of our mini-series, Jesus answering the question:

- Matthew 24:3, "what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

Mat 25:31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.

Mat 25:32 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.

Mat 25:33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

Mat 25:34 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.

Mat 25:35 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,

Mat 25:36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

Mat 25:37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?

Mat 25:38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?

Mat 25:39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'

Mat 25:40 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.'

Mat 25:41 "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.

Mat 25:42 For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,
Mat 25:43 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.'

Mat 25:44 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?'

Mat 25:45 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.'

Mat 25:46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Let's set the scene:

- Like a grand finale, this is an awesome scene for the disciples.
- Two days before Jesus is arrested..
- They are on the **Mount of Olives** (24:3)
- This is the place the Prophet Joel foretold the final judgment would take place:
 - Joel 2:27-3:2 You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else. And... I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit... And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved... For behold, in those days... I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there..."
- Sitting there, **the Valley of Jehoshaphat** is directly below them.
 - All this is not lost on the disciples, I assure you.
- **Here is Jesus, saying:**
 - 1) **I'm the King (v34)**
 - 2) **I will judge every individual in all the nations**
 - 3) **There are 2 pre-determined eternal places created by God:**
 - **One for the righteous, who by faith have followed the King (Heaven)**
 - **One for the "cursed," who reject the King, and followed their own way (Hell)**
 - This is the break down.
 - This is the message.
 - This is the lesson.
 - **Before I delve into those 3 things, let me say a few words:**

First, Regarding the sobering tone Jesus takes here, I think the theologian **Alexander MacLaren** said it best:

- **"Better to burn in on our hearts the thought, 'I shall be there,' than to lose the solemn impression in efforts to unravel the difficulties of the passage."**
 - That's not to say it shouldn't be studied. We should!
 - But more importantly, **WE WILL BE THERE.**
- Some suggest this isn't a parable at all.
 - We (people) are compared to sheep all the time
 - It is from this passage where Paul, John, and Peter glean some of their teachings on the end times:
 - Eph_1:20-22; 1Th_4; 1 Cor. 15; 2 Peter 3; Revelation
 - Therefore, this is not a hypothetical story, like the talents or the virgins.
 - IOW, there are not 10 literal virgins in the end times, half ready half not.

- That's a story to convey a truth.
 - Also, there are not 3 literal servants with varying abilities given talents by the master
 - That's a story to convey a truth.
 - There ARE, of course, "all nations" that will be gathered together...
- This is a "home run ending" to Jesus' answer to the end times question.
 - While it's similar to the way he taught parables, it's really not a parable.
 - It's very borderline – because of the dialogue back and forth between King Jesus and both groups.
 - But the judgment is going to happen
 - And WE WILL BE THERE.

Second, **If we only had this one teaching from Jesus about judgment, we'd be a very works-minded culture.**

- There is nothing in this teaching from Jesus about grace or faith.
 - Remember, Jesus is not in the business of confusing you.
 - His **whole counsel** is necessary to comprehend the meaning of life.
- Jesus said several very significant, never-forget-this statements, such as:
 - **"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." (John 11:25-26)**
 - Nothing about feeding the poor, healing the sick, visiting prisoners is contextually tied to eternal living.
 - The word "believe" is used 90 times in the gospels.
 - pisteuō = to have faith
 - From pistis (faith) = *persuasion*, that is, *credence*; moral *conviction*, assurance, belief, believe, faith, fidelity. (45 times)
 - **And that if you BELIEVE and/or have FAITH, God will save you and empower you to accomplish that which He created you to do.**
- Isaiah 64:6 says "all our righteous acts are like filthy rags"
 - Only the righteousness of God – doing HIS work – accounts for anything.
 - **Titus 3:4-7: "When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."**
- **And therefore, I want to confirm with you that this last teaching on the end times is not about becoming "saved".**
 - It is about **The lifestyle of the already saved.**
 - These three sections in Matthew 25 focus on **brides, servants, and now saints.**
 - Not how they *became* brides, servants, and saints.
 - But what they do BECAUSE they are brides, servants, and saints.
 - Brides of Christ shine their light and keep being fueled by the Holy Spirit.
 - Servants of the Master constantly multiply what has been given to them.
 - And saints meet the needs of the poor and those in crisis.
 - These are not qualifications for sainthood.
 - They are **Identifiers.**
 - Serving people in need.
 - You have it, they need it.

- **“Good works done for God's sake, through Jesus Christ, are here noticed as marking the character of believers made holy by the Spirit of Christ, and as the effects of grace bestowed on those who do them.” – Matthew Henry**
 - What the good theologian is saying is that salvation is followed by God’s growing characteristics in the believer, that result in good works.
 - Identifiers.
 - Not qualifications.

Now, Let’s take a closer look at the break down of the basic message:

1) Jesus is the King (v34)

- *Mat 25:34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom...*
- This reality is HIS kingdom.
- You live in His world.
- He does not live in yours.
- He decides what is best for his reality.
- You decide if you want to trust Him, and obey Him.
- That’s how kingdoms work.
- Living in a country with a democratic republic form of governance, we are far removed from relating to what it’s like living in a monarchy.
- That’s one of the reasons I think genuine obedience is so difficult for many Americans
- Jesus is not a president you get to vote out of office in 4 years.
- He’s the KING.
- You are responsible for one thing: trust Him, or don’t.

2) Jesus is the judge of all individuals – all nations

- If you do trust Him, then like in no other kingdom of man – you inherit His kingdom!
 - “inherit the kingdom” is a phrase used 5 times in the NT
 - The righteous – those made holy, justified by God BY FAITH – will inherit the kingdom of God.
- If you decide He’s wrong – or that he’s a lunatic – or that He’s a lousy King – or that he isn’t even real, then you have chosen life separated from the King.
- Jesus compares such people to GOATS.

My wife wants a goat. (*goats in the trees*)

- For a while, I thought she was joking.
- She’s not.
- I keep putting her off.
- I’m not even sure it’s legal in Rita Ranch. I should probably find that out.
- But I digress...
 - **Goats are described as stubborn**, independent, don’t like being penned up, looking for a good head-butting contest among their peers, give an inch they’ll take a mile...
 - **Sheep** are described as followers, gatherers, co-dependent, obedient, gentle, easy to get along with, etc.
- **There is nothing that needs to be read into this passage.**
 - **Goats are a symbol of “I did it my way”**

- **Sheep are a symbol of “I followed the Lord”**

You might be a Goat if... (goofy-faced goat)

- You say things like,
 - “God should have done it this way...”
 - “If I were God, I’d have done it like this...”
- You know what you’re about to engage in is sin, but you do it anyway.
- You see the hungry on the side of the road, but rarely – if ever – have you stopped to give him a sandwich.
- You see the new person or couple sitting alone before worship begins on Sunday morning, but don’t do the very easy thing – say Hello.
 - NC, let’s be known for being WELCOMING!
- You’ve never darkened the door of a prison.
- You’ve been coming to NC for over 6 months, but aren’t serving.
- When you hear the word “obedience” you immediately shout back “grace”
- You have 10 times as many clothes as you need, but have never once stopped to put a shirt on a dirty homeless person.
- You visit all kinds of people, but can’t remember the last time you offered to visit a sick person.
- You don’t even consider welcoming a stranger because you’ve watched too many scary movies about strangers.
- You’re offended by this list.
- **How many saw the Lethal Weapon movies?**
 - You might be a goat if, When you read “The Sheep and the Goats” and you say to Jesus, “Diplomatic Immunity”

You might be a sheep if...

- You’ve fed the hungry
- You’ve met the needs of the poor
- You’ve welcomed strangers
- You’ve spent time with people simply because they were sick
- You’ve given hope to the troubled, and imprisoned

3) There are 2 pre-determined eternal places created by God:

- **One for the righteous, who by faith have followed the King (Heaven)**
- **One for the “cursed,” who reject the King, and followed their own way (Hell)**

There is a very real heaven, and there is a very real hell.

- **Heaven:**
 - The eternal home of the servants of the King
 - The angels, the heavenly beings, God and the Lamb, and the souls of earth who put their faith in their Creator.
 - *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more,*

neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” (Rev. 21:1-4)

- **Hell:**
 - “Depart from me, you cursed...”
 - **“Ye are cursed, because ye have sinned, and would not come unto me that ye might have life. - No work of piety has proceeded from your hand, because the carnal mind, which is enmity against me, reigned in your heart; and ye would not have me to reign over you. Depart!” - Adam Clarke**
 - The eternal home of Satan, his demons who made the unfortunate and head-scratching decision to join him, and all who make the same head-scratching decision to reject their Creator, choosing eternity without Him.
 - **(next)** Complete darkness
 - Absence of God and His Spirit.
 - Absence of light, altogether.
 - Fear, chaos, torment,
 - **Some people say we – the saints – shouldn’t be in the business of “scaring people into heaven” by talking too much about hell.**
 - While I understand the dangers of an imbalanced approach to the grace of God, I think the church has swung the pendulum so far the other way that we NEVER talk about hell.
 - And now, many pastors are teaching their congregations a version of hell that isn’t eternal, or worse – that hell doesn’t really exist.

(next) Keith Green’s two other very influential songs

- “No One Believes in Me Anymore”
 - A musical version of the Screwtape Letters by CS Lewis.
- And “Asleep in the Light”
 - **Take a listen...**

(last slide)

Homework:

- Feed the poor
- Give water to the thirsty
- Welcome the stranger
- Clothe the naked
- Visit the sick
- Visit those in prison and/or crisis
 - The identifiers of the saints of God

Pray and close