

The “Right” side of History

Eternity Series

Week 2

7.17.22

Matthew 25:31-46 (CSB)

THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on the left. 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.

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 took me in; ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me; I was in prison and you visited 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 take you in, or without clothes and clothe you?

³⁹ When did we see you sick, or in prison, and visit you?’

⁴⁰ “And the King will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

⁴¹ “Then he will also say to those on the 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 didn’t take me in; I was naked and you didn’t clothe me, sick and in prison and you didn’t take care of me.’

⁴⁴ “Then they too will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help you?’

⁴⁵ “Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

⁴⁶ “And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

1. The “Right Side” of History.

A. I hate that phrase.

1. If you haven’t heard this before, it refers to people making decisions now that will be judged by the future.

2. However, it seems to always be used by people with an agenda.

a. One way it is used refers to the issue of American slavery.

b. I am saddened that, for centuries Christian people used Scripture to justify the sin of slavery.

3. Unfortunately, many within our country now uses this phrase “right side of history” in arguing for relationships that are contrary to Scripture.

4. Their argument is that, someday, we will finally grow up and realize that we were reading the Bible wrong and we will openly accept their accepting views.

5. And if we don’t, history will judge us.

B. It isn’t history that I’m worried about.

1. Let’s be honest, Americans do not like history.

2. Furthermore, we write and rewrite history to our whims and our desires.

3. **What concerns me is not being judged by history but being judged by God.**

2. Matthew 25 is all about judgment.

A. Jesus tells 3 parables in Matthew 25.

1. The first is about ten virgins.

- a. Five are ready for the groom's arrival.
- b. Five are not.
- c. The five who are not miss out on his coming and miss the banquet.

2. The second parable tells of three servants, each given some talents.

- a. A talent was worth about 6,000 Roman denarii, or 20 years wages.
- b. The wicked and lazy servant buries the master's money, losing any growth.
- c. This servant was "thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

3. The parable of the sheep and goats forms the 3rd parable emphasizing the same point.

B. The point: Judgment is certain.

1. The Biblical letter of Hebrews says:

Hebrews 9:27–28 (CSB)

²⁷And just as it is appointed for people to die once—and after this, judgment—²⁸so also Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

2. This is what, I believe, bothers people today.

- a. We don't like the idea of judgment.
- b. Even within the Church, we are very touchy about the theme of judgment.

C. Judgment necessitates clear TRUTH.

1. To honestly judge, there has to be a right and wrong.

2. And that truth cannot be relative.
3. **Relative judgment is not righteous judgment.**
4. The reality of judgment is not the same as hate.
 - a. On Earth, A good judge does not hate people, but loves the law.
 - b. God does commit people to hell out of hate, but out of His love for His own righteousness.

3. What does God have against goats?

A. The answer is nothing.

1. **God loves goats, but he is only keeping sheep.**
2. When we apply this analogy to Christians and Sinners, the Bible is clear that God doesn't hate sinners.
3. In fact, in several places in the Bible it is said that God does not want anyone to perish and go to eternal death.

Ezekiel 33:11 (CSB)

¹¹Tell them, 'As I live—this is the declaration of the Lord GOD—I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked person should turn from his way and live.

4. But because of God's holiness, He will only allow those that accept Jesus and their Lord and Savior into eternal life.

5. Those that reject him are allowed to go to eternal death.

B. **God is not sending people to hell.**

1. Often we get this picture of an angry God throwing people into a place of fire and torment and laughing the whole time he is doing it.
2. But that couldn't be further from the truth.

3. God is not looking forward to the day that he can send you or anyone else into eternal damnation.

a. In fact, he is holding back his righteous judgment so that we might receive another chance.

b. 2Pe 3:9 NIV - The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

4. **God is not sending us to hell, sin is.**

a. The consequence of sin is eternal death.

b. God is offering to save you from that death but if you reject him, hell is your eternal destiny.

4. What does Matthew 25 say about “the Right side of history”?

A. Jesus’ parable says that the Shepherd will separate sheep from goats.

1. “He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.”

2. **Picture:** You and I are facing the throne of God.

a. He is separating the righteous from the unrighteous.

b. He is sorting them, not because he loves one and hates the other.

c. God doesn’t “hate” goats, but he is only collecting sheep.

3. The herds start moving.

4. But guess what? They aren’t moving the way you thought.

B. **Your right is God’s left.**

1. Jesus didn’t say they moved to our right or our left.

2. We are facing a different direction than God is.

3. So His left is my right.

4. My left is His right.

5. It's possible to believe you are on the right side of eternity and ultimately realize you were facing the wrong direction.

C. It isn't my direction that matters but God's.

1. That is why repentance is so important.

2. Repentance faces us in the right direction.

5. Eternity shows up in our actions.

A. Jesus points out that eternal life is connected to what we do here on Earth.

1. He said that there will be those who inherit eternal life because they served God through the least of people.

2. And there will be those who receive eternal death, and their indictment is their refusal to do good.

3. How does this work?

B. We are not saved by works.

1. We cannot work hard enough to earn our way to heaven.

2. But good deeds ARE PART of the Christian life.

a. Faith without works is DEAD.

b. My love for Jesus will flow through me in acts of love and service to others.

3. Jesus does more than question the salvation of those who claim to love God but hate fellow man.

4. Jesus says that those people who refuse to love the "least of these" will go away to eternal punishment.

C. People who have been radically affected by the love of Jesus will love other people.

1. People who love Jesus do not want others to miss out.

2. People who love Jesus overflow with compassion.
3. People who have grasped eternity want others to grasp it as well.

Close: Jesus said that a day of separation is coming.

A. He will separate God's people from those who rejected Him.

1. And at that day Matthew 25:46 (CSB)

⁴⁶ "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

2. We have a responsibility to share this hope of eternal life with all we come in contact with.

B. Today, we must first ask "Am I on the right side of eternity?"

1. Let me tell you this story;

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel awoke one morning to read his own obituary in the local newspaper: "Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, who died yesterday, devised a way for more people to be killed in a war than ever before, and he died a very rich man."

Actually, it was Alfred's older brother who had died; a newspaper reporter had bungled the epitaph.

But the account had a profound effect on Nobel. He decided he wanted to be known for something other than developing the means to kill people efficiently and for amassing a fortune in the process. So he initiated the Nobel Prize, the award for scientists and writers who foster peace.

Nobel said, "Every man ought to have the chance to correct his epitaph in midstream and write a new one."

Few things will change us as much as looking at our life as though it is finished.¹

C. Today we apply this message to in a few ways:

1. First, if judgment was today, where would you land?
 - a. It's possible to think you are on the right and realize you were actually on God's left.
 - b. But you don't have to stay there.
 - c. In fact, that can all change for you today.
2. Second, may be you are wondering how YOU can change the eternity of others around you.
 - a. Two key ways: Prayer.
 - b. Love.
 - c. Today, you won't argue someone into the Kingdom, but you might be able to love them into it.
3. Let us ask God for a clearer view of eternity and the empowerment to tell others about Him.

¹ Larson, Craig Brian. 2002. [*750 Engaging Illustrations for Preachers, Teachers & Writers*](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.