

# The final judgment

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please open your Bibles to chapter 25 of Matthew, the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25. We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Matthew, and I know given the day some of you probably were hoping for a resurrection sermon.

The good news is we're almost there. We've been going through the book of Matthew now for, I didn't look, but probably a little over two years. And we're almost there, I think, August or September, so stick around.

We'll get there. So we're headed for the resurrection, but right now we're at the end of the Olivet Discourse, and we're looking there, Matthew 25, verses 31 through 46. Let's read there together. 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 the 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.

[ 1 : 19 ] 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?

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 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, and to 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?

[ 2 : 30 ] Then He will answer them, saying, Truly I say to you, as you did not do to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me. And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, again, we ask for your Spirit's help in the preaching of your word. We ask that you would be glorified. We pray also that we would understand the truth of your word. As we come to the end of the Olivet Discourse, that you would make clear the meaning of this passage. And, Lord, we pray as well that you would lay it on all our hearts, that we would seek to, Lord, be a part of these sheep, as they're described, or those who are put on the right.

So, Lord, we pray, work through the preaching of your word, for your glory, and for the good of your people. In Christ's name, amen. So, as I mentioned earlier, we've been looking at the Olivet Discourse, here in Matthew, chapter 24 and 25.

And now we've really come to the end of that. And as we've looked at the Olivet Discourse, we've talked about how it's really divided into Jesus answering two questions. And so, the part that we've been looking at now began in chapter 24, verse 36.

[ 3 : 37 ] And it addresses Jesus' second coming and the end of the age, which we've seen are really one and the same event. And we'll see that again today. Unlike the destruction of the temple, no one will know when he will return and bring the end of the age, because there will be no signs given.

That's the consistent message we've seen in each of the teachings since then. We've seen seven different, we've seen six different examples. This is the seventh now teaching about Jesus' second coming.

So, today we come really to the end of the Olivet Discourse, to that last teaching about Jesus' second coming and the end of the age. And there's a few truths that we're going to see here in this passage. Some of those are the messages we've seen all along.

But what we see in verses 31 and 32, first off, is that his return and the final judgment are one and the same. So, again, remember I said we're answering two questions. The first question that they had asked Jesus was, when will the temple be destroyed?

And in chapter 24 up until verse 35, we saw Jesus answering that question. But since then he's been answering, what about the end of the age and Jesus' return? And so what we see is that when Jesus returns, it will be the end of the age and the final judgment will happen.

[ 4 : 47 ] So all those things are one and the same event. And we see in verses 31 and 32 that Christ is seated on his throne from which he will judge the world.

And we see as well that the judgment is entrusted to him by God the Father. And at 1731 we read, God has fits the day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed.

And of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. So those of you who are looking for the resurrection, there it is. I got it in. But because he's raised him from the dead, this man whom he has raised from the dead is the one who will be seated on the throne who will judge. And of course we've already seen in the Olivet Discourse Jesus speaking of him being seated on the throne. Him coming in power in that way. But here we see that it's from the throne that he judges all people.

And that this judgment has been appointed to him or entrusted to him by God the Father. We see as well that when he returns all the angels will come with him. Let's look back at verses 31 and 32.

[ 5 : 51 ] 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 from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

Of course this passage reminds us of the parable of the weeds or the parable of the wheat and tares back in Matthew 13. And remember when Jesus explained the parable, he said this.

The one who sows the good seed is the son of man. The field is the world and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one. And the enemy who sowed them is the devil.

The harvest is the end of the age and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The son of man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all lawbreakers.

And throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father. He who has ears, let him hear.

[ 6 : 52 ] And so what Jesus taught in Matthew 13, he now is teaching again here in Matthew 25. Same teaching. And he's even explaining to them when this will take place. It's at the end of the age when he returns.

This is what's going to happen. So his return will mean that very thing, the end of the age. It's the consummation of all things. The disciples questioned back in chapter 24, verse 3.

Tell us when will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age? And remember we saw already destruction of the temple in AD 70 is how he answers the first question.

But it's coming and in an age of the same event. When he comes it will be the end of the age. Now that has big implications as we think about eschatology in the end times.

First of all, if at the moment Jesus returns, the judgment takes place, that also means that there will be no gap. In particular, there are some views that take a seven year gap or they place some kind of time period on a gap in which there will be a time between Jesus coming a first time, a second time, and Jesus coming a third time.

[ 7 : 58 ] But there's no speech anywhere in the Bible of Jesus' return a third time. When Jesus returns a second time, it will be the end of the age and the judgment will take place. That also means that it hasn't already occurred.

Right? If Jesus' return means the end of the age and the age is still going on, then therefore Jesus has not yet returned. Right? This is simple logic. So, two implications of this for us that are important as we think about the end times.

What Jesus is teaching is that when he returns, he will bring the end of the age. What that will mean, one of the things we saw, is that the angels will go out in the world, all the people will be gathered, and the judgment will take place.

If I were to expand a little further into what we see elsewhere in God's word, we understand that at that moment, that will be when the dead will be brought up, resurrected, to stand before the judgment.

All who are still living will be brought before the judgment. And to some extent, his servants, these angels, will go and carry out that work in bringing in, gathering in all these people. And so, when Jesus returns will be the final judgment.

[ 9 : 06 ] And as I said, that means that there's no gap in between. There's no third coming. And it also means Jesus hasn't already come because that judgment has not yet taken place. But again, remember the message that we've seen throughout the Olivet Discourse.

How are we going to know when that's going to happen? What's the major indication that that's happening? Jesus comes. Right? There's no indication given to us anywhere in anything that we've seen.

And Jesus has talked about that already. He will come as a thief in the night. But when he returns, everyone will know it. Well, there's a good reason everyone will know it. Right? Not the simple fact that it will be visible from the sky.

But the very fact that the angels will go out and gather all the people together. Something's going to be up. Everyone will know it. There will be no other time period after that. At least on this earth as we know it.

Understand as well, we see in verses 32 and 33. And then really all throughout. But repeated again in verse 46. That his return will bring a final and eternal separation.

[ 10 : 06 ] That when Jesus returns, as I've said already, the fact that there's not some gap in between or some third coming. When Jesus returns will be the end of time. And in that moment, there will be a final and eternal separation.

Again, verse 32 and then verse 33. 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.

And then in verse 46. And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. So you see even the eternity of it. There's a separation that will be eternal.

So first, this judgment will be general and universal. It says in verse 32. All the nations will be brought. There's no one who will avoid this judgment. Everyone will stand before the judgment seat of God.

I know sometimes I've heard people talk about, as a Christian, avoiding that judgment seat. The reality is, everyone's going to come before the judgment seat. There will be a separation that takes place. If you're covered in the blood of Christ, that judgment obviously will look different.

[ 11 : 09 ] But there will be a judgment for all people. All who have ever lived will appear before him on that day. Everyone will be gathered. And we see as well that in that gathering, there will be a mixture of believers and unbelievers until that separation comes.

And that means as well, that's true for us in this world. As he gathers these people together from all over the world, and then he separates them, we understand that there are some who are goats and there are some that are sheep. Again, I think as we look at eschatological positions, I think this also teaches us that there will not be a universal salvation of all people on the earth before Christ returns.

When Christ returns, he will gather the people and he will separate the sheep from the goats. It will be missed, even as we saw in the parable of the wheat and the tares. When the angels come to reap the earth, they find that there's been weeds that have been planted in amongst the wheat. And I think that is teaching us about what it will be like when Jesus returns. Now again, the encouragement to us is we know that there will be people saved from every tribe, tongue, and nation. The gospel will go forth to the very ends of the earth.

But I think we can't confuse that with the idea that all people everywhere in the world will be saved. There will be a mixed nature to the end. And I would even go so far as to say that would be true

even of the church.

[12:20] There's never going to be a pure church. There will always be unbelievers mixed in with believers. There will even be false believers, people professing to be believers who aren't, even to the very end when Jesus returns.

And so even though we have a responsibility to guard the sheep and we're to look out for each other spiritually, we can't do it perfectly. And we have to realize that that separation will not take place until Jesus does it from the throne.

Matthew 13, 30. This is again the parable of the wheat and the tares. This isn't Jesus' explanation but the parable itself. It says, Let both grow together until the harvest. And at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned.

But gather the weed into my barn. And so again, Let them grow together until the harvest. If the harvest we understand is the end of the age, then we know as well that Jesus is saying that this is the nature of the world and really of the church until that happens.

There will be this mixed nature of believers and unbelievers mingled together in the world. 1

Corinthians 5, 9-10 says, I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people.

[13:30] Not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters since then you would need to go out of the world. And what Paul is saying is he's speaking of an issue that's within the church and needing to deal with an issue within the church but he's acknowledging that, Look, the world is always going to have this nature of people who are opposed to God and his truth.

I want to encourage you as well, although not specifically stated here, understanding we have to rightly understand that there will be no mistake made in the judgment. Again, as we think of the church and the mingled nature and even as we interact with other people, we probably regularly and often regularly wrongly assess people.

We think of them one way when in reality their heart may be far different from that. Man looks at the outward appearance but God judges the heart. And so too in that day there will be no mistake made.

Jesus sitting on the throne. He's a good shepherd and he knows those who are his own. That's exactly what the Gospel of John tells us. John chapter 10 verses 11 and verses 14 through 15.

Jesus says there, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own sheep and my own know me.

[14:50] Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep. So on that day there will be no mistake because the judgment isn't left up to us. It's left up to Christ and he knows those who are his own.

In fact, notice the extent of the knowledge. Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. So Jesus compares his knowledge of believers as being equal to his knowledge of the Father and the Father's knowledge of him in an inter-Trinitarian relationship.

There is no greater knowledge, right? They perfectly know one another. And so too he speaks of his sheep that way. And notice as well what Jesus says. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

I know my own and my own know me. And I lay down my life for the sheep. So again, why will there be no mistake at the judgment? Because those who are seen as sheep on that day, who are separated from the goats, those who are put on his right hand, those who are given eternal life, are those for whom Christ has died.

He laid down his life for those sheep. He knows them. His blood covers them. And so there will be no mistake in that day in the judgment. Now, that may well be a source of hope for us and encouragement for us, but that may also be discouraging.

[16:09] For the encouragement side, if you trust in Jesus Christ, you know that your salvation is secure on that day. There's nothing for you to fear in the judgment that you will enter into eternal life.

On the other hand, there may be those of us even here who might think there's some other way of salvation. There's some other way that you might get into heaven apart from Christ. Maybe it's our good works or things we've done.

But the reality is this, that if the blood of Christ hasn't covered us, then Jesus isn't going to be fooled. He knows his sheep and those for whom he's died. Notice as well in verse 34 that the sheep

inherit the kingdom prepared for them since the foundation of the world.

This is a beautiful picture. 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. We've been seeing some of this in Sunday school with covenant theology, but again we get this picture.

Salvation wasn't some backup plan after Adam sinned. From the foundation of the world, God had purposed to save a people unto himself and even had prepared a place for them. Even though as of yet, the new earth and the new heavens have not been created.

[ 17 : 22 ] God's purpose from the foundation of the world was to one day create a new world with new skies, new heavens, in which his people would dwell with him forever.

That was always God's intention. He's prepared it for them from before the foundation of the world. And so that ought to be encouragement for those of you who have trusted in Jesus Christ to know that there is a place that's prepared for you from before you ever existed.

Before you were born, there's purpose for you, a place that's perfect for you. It says in verse 34 that they are blessed by the Father. And I think even as we went through our pastoral prayer and as we go through our prayer sheet on Wednesdays, and we know that there are people in our body who are suffering, but I find encouragement in this that no matter what the circumstances in the Christian's life, no matter what it looks like, the experiences they're going through, the reality is that their eternal state is blessed.

They are blessed by the Father. That though life may be hard and though it's faced with trials and tribulations, that our eternal state is blessed by the Father. Even to go further and realize that the mingling of the world, the way I spoke of earlier, that there will always be believers and unbelievers in the world, will mean that believers will be hated by those who don't love the Lord.

And yet to know that though we may be hated by the world, yet we are blessed by the Father. That ought to encourage us. And I've hinted at this already, but we saw that the kingdom is prepared for them.

[ 18 : 59 ] And I think God the Father has prepared a place that's perfectly fit for His people to be with Him and dwell with Him forever. And there's nothing like that that we've ever experienced.

The closest that man has ever known is the Garden of Eden in which God walked with man. But even that was a place with the possibility of sin. We know that man was, given the responsibility of guarding the garden, and yet Satan got in.

And so we understand that Eden wasn't that place. And so ever since then, we have been longing for that rest that we could be with God, dwell with Him forever. And here we have a place that's prepared for us.

And so even the best places that we have ever experienced, whatever it may be for you guys, I love Yosemite National Park. We one time spent almost a week camping there in the valley.

Love it. It's beautiful. And as grand as that is, it doesn't compare with what God has prepared in the new world to dwell in His presence. And we're even given that to have a taste of the goodness, of the joys, of what it will be like.

[ 20 : 05 ] But they don't compare. And what I want you to see is that if the place is prepared for us, it's fit for us. It's designed to be what we need and what we can accomplish in this life.

A place where we can dwell with God in His very presence without sin and without the effects of the fall. And so this is a glorious place that's spoken of here.

We can say as well that this kingdom spoken of, this eternal kingdom, is purchased by the Son who has gone before us to prepare it for us. And so it's purchased by Him by the shedding of His blood. Again, what we will soon see as we continue in Matthew. In fact, even Lord willing, next week we begin to look at the plot to kill Jesus. And so we're moving toward Jesus' death. But what is Jesus doing at the cross?

What is Jesus' resurrection doing? It's purchasing that eternal kingdom for us. And we know as well that He went before us to prepare a place for us. John 14, 2. In my Father's house are many rooms.

[ 21 : 09 ] If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And so Jesus has gone before us to prepare a place for us. And again, we see that this is God's purpose from all eternity.

Ephesians 1, 3-5. God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

In love He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ. So through Christ we have every spiritual blessing. This has been God's purpose and plan for all eternity.

And although we are recipients of that, we have yet to experience it fully. We've yet to enjoy it and we await still. Jesus has returned. And I think, you have to understand as well, you may remember back from our sermons on heaven.

But this means as well, when the Christian dies, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. And so we understand that when a Christian dies, that they're immediately in the presence of the Lord.

[ 22 : 13 ] In heaven, as we understand what heaven is. And yet, that doesn't compare to what will be when Christ returns. Even those who are in heaven are longing for the return of Christ, that He will come, they will be reunited with glorified bodies, and they will dwell in a new earth and new heavens with Him.

And so, even that experience isn't yet as great as it will be. Now we see in verse 41 as well, look there with 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. And you probably notice as I read through this, there's a direct correspondence in the separation.

He goes through even, and all the things that they did, and they ask the question, He goes back through it, and is that parallel with those, who are on the left hand. And so we see a parallel between these two.

That the unbelievers will depart from His presence, which is the opposite of what is told to those on the right hand who will enter into His presence forever. Those who are on the left will depart from His presence.

[ 23 : 18 ] This probably is the worst punishment of all as we think of this, as we look at this judgment upon man, that to be separated from the presence of God. Now there's great discussion about what exactly does that mean.

We understand that God is omnipresent. Right? That means there's nowhere that God could put anyone or anything that would actually be out of His presence. You understand that? So what does it mean to be separated from the presence of God?

Well, I think we have to understand you're separated from all that's good and enjoyable about God and His presence. All that's lovely and loving about God's presence is separated from you.

You don't ever escape God's presence. I imagine those in hell would even desire that. But there's no escaping His presence. But His presence is there in judgment eternally.

They will be removed from the delight of His presence. What that means, and I think we probably take this for granted in this life, but right now all people share in the fact that we have the presence of God in a way that will not be true after the judgment for those who don't know God.

[ 24 : 27 ] There will be something different. So what are we speaking of here? Well, I think this would include all that we might think of as common grace in this life. Now that's a wide category that I don't have time to expand, but God's Word talks about the rains fall and the righteous and the unrighteous alike.

An unrighteous man can plant a garden and the rain will fall and it will grow and he'll produce fruit. He may be successful in business. I mean, there are ways that God may bless his life here, but those blessings will not be there in eternity for those who are separated from God.

We understand as well that God is the fountainhead of all that is good. Now I spoke of this a little bit when I was speaking of Yosemite earlier and eternal life, but everything that we enjoy in this life, all that we think of is good.

And we know that this is a fallen world and we know that even sometimes the good is missed and there's hardship. But the good things that we enjoy are all reflections of God's goodness, of His grace, of His love, of His presence.

And so when it says it will be separated from the presence of God, this is what I think is meant. All the good things that just happen because God's a gracious God will be removed from them in that judgment. There will be no chance for that afterwards.

[ 25 : 49 ] Everything that's good and joyful here reflects God and His presence. And those things will be done without there. And it goes on and says that they will be cast into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels in verse 41.

Now again, think of the contrast with the parallel that we looked at. Remember, the kingdom is prepared for God's people from before the foundation of the world. It's contrasted with the goats or those on the left are cast into a place that's prepared not specifically for them but for the devil and his angels.

The place prepared for the demons. This is not a place that's commiserate with their being, how God's designed them. This is a place fit for those angels who rebelled against Him, who were in opposition to Him.

Revelation 14, 11 describes it this way. It says, The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever and they have no rest day or night. Even that is powerful as we think of the contrast of the Sabbath rest of God's people.

Since Eden, we long for that Sabbath rest. In Sunday school, we were talking about Canaan, the promised land, being a place of rest and yet God's word says, but there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God that has not yet been realized, which is that eternal kingdom that we just spoke of, the new earth and the new heavens.

[ 27 : 10 ] That's what we long for, that eternal rest. But notice the contrast that those that are cast into hell, it says, there will be no rest day or night. And I think, literally we may think, oh well, you don't get to sleep, but it's more than that and you understand that, I hope.

The rest that we long for is to be in the presence of God and they're without that. And in contrast to the blessed state, remember we said the state of those who are believers, they're blessed by the Father, we see in verse 41 that the wicked here are cursed.

And they're condemned not for a lack of religion, not because they weren't religious enough, but for a lack of mercy and love. Jesus said back in Matthew 23, 23 through 24, woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faithfulness.

These you ought to have done without neglecting the others, you blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel. And so, Jesus' condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees is in some way repeated here that they have neglected the weightier matters of the law.

They neglected to have mercy and love. They may well have been religious people. They may have been at church every Sunday. They may have been at prayer meeting. They may have tithed to the Lord.

[ 28 : 38 ] And yet, if they're without the mercy and love that God has placed in their heart, then they're not led in the kingdom. That really leads to the last point that I want to look at and that's the issue of works that's mentioned in 34 through 45.

I won't go back and reread all that, but you saw that Jesus describes the acts that they did and they ask, well, when did we do that? And we see Jesus' answer that you've done it to the least of them. Now, as Jesus explains this, and in some way, the separation is made based upon what you've done.

At the same time, I want to encourage you that this does not mean that anything we could ever do could merit for us this glorious kingdom that's described here. We can't be merciful or loving enough that we're somehow going to merit eternal life or this kingdom spoken of.

But we do see that the one distinguishing factor here between these two groups is godliness and worldliness. Or we might say righteousness and wickedness. those who are clothed in the righteousness of Christ and those who are not.

Wealth will not matter. All our talents and abilities won't matter in that judgment. All that will matter is if we trust in Jesus Christ. Are we in him?

[ 29 : 58 ] And as Jesus speaks about these actions, these things that they've done, what I want you to understand is that Jesus will reward those who have been obedient to his command.

And when we look at his command, we think the second greatest commandment, Jesus says, is to love your neighbor as yourself. Now again, they're not rewarded for the obedience itself but for the work that's done in their heart by the Spirit.

In other words, what I would say as we look at this is that Jesus judges them based on this because it's outworking of what God has already done in their heart. There may be ways in which we try to be merciful to people but if we haven't trust in Jesus Christ, that's not enough to save us.

If we have trust in Jesus Christ, if God has changed our hearts by his Spirit, then what ought to be flowing out of every believer is love and mercy toward those around them. They ought to live out these commandments.

This change that the Spirit does in us is the fountain from which all obedience and mercy flows. And so the works described here are works of mercy. And as our Lord is merciful, so mercy is to be part of the character of every believer.

[ 31 : 07 ] All of his disciples should bear that mark. 1 John 3, 16-18 By this we know love, that he laid in his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk, but in deed and in truth.

And so the way John puts it here, or God puts it here through John, is that the idea that someone could be a believer and love and mercy not abide in their heart is completely contradictory.

It's not possible. James' interpretation of this teaching, I think, in James 2, 14-17, I think James' interpreting what Jesus has said here in our passage, he says, what good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have words?

Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warmed and filled without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

[ 32 : 15 ] So also, faith by itself, if it does not have words, is dead. And my understanding of what James is saying is that if you claim to have faith but don't have words, that's not faith at all.

There's no genuine faith there. And so Jesus here is speaking of that very same thing that there ought to be fruit in the believer's life. And it's based on that fruit that flows from the faith and from the spirit that judgment will happen.

Notice as well that he describes this service, this ministry as service to the king, service to the Lord himself. Look at verse 40. And the king will answer him, Truly I say to you, as you did to one of the least of the these my brothers, you did it to me.

Again, this ought to encourage us. It really fulfills the first commandment, the greatest commandment, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. How do you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength?

Well, one way you love the Lord your God in that way is by loving your neighbor as yourself. In doing so, it's service to the Lord. It's an expression of love to the Lord. It's what moves and motivates us.

[ 33 : 21 ] Our love for God moves us to love others around us. Colossians 3, 17 says, And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

And Ephesians 7 tells us we're to work for the Lord and not for man. So even in our service to man, we're to see ourselves as serving the Lord. And as we see in that day of judgment, that's exactly how God sees it.

Now, this is great news for us. One thing I think is that this means all our good works will be remembered by our Lord, though they may go completely unnoticed in this life.

And in fact, there's almost spoken of in God's word greater reward for those works that are unnoticed by man. We're not seeking praise from man. We're not merciful to others so that others will think highly of us.

That's probably that example of the false works, the false faith that we've spoken of earlier. If we love the Lord, we serve him by serving others. And God knows this.

[ 34 : 27 ] None of that goes unknown by our Lord. I think as well, that also means a lack of mercy will be remembered in the judgment. Faking it, false mercy, all these things will be remembered in the judgment.

James 2.13 says, for judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. And so the distinguishing factor here again is this positive characteristic of mercy and love that flows from the heart of those who have been changed by the Spirit.

So what does this all mean for us? Well, one, I think, application of this that we have to take into account is that there's a great separation coming. This isn't intended to be some fire and brimstone sermon.

I'm not trying to scare you, but the reality is to put here before us in God's Word. I'm not preaching this. You guys know, I've already said, I'm preaching straight through Matthew. This is what Jesus has spoken of and that's what we're speaking of because He has spoken of it.

There is a great separation that's coming. And the reality is that all of us will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and we will all be placed either on His right or His left. We will all be recognized either as His sheep or His goats who are posing who aren't really a part of His flock. [ 35 : 43 ] And so the question really is, will you be placed on His right or left? Where will you be in that day of judgment? 2 Corinthians 5, 10 says, For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Every one of us will be there one day before Christ at that judgment. And what's spoken of here, what Jesus is describing, is exactly what we'll experience. We'll stand before Him and He'll separate us either to the right or to the left.

And as Jesus has spoken of His second coming, He's made clear, no signs will be given to us. He will come like a thief in the night. We won't know when that will take place. And so, the impetus has been on us all along throughout this Olivet Discourse.

Be ready for that day. Be prepared. If the owner of the house would have known when the thief was coming, he would have set up. If the virgins would have known when the groom was coming, they would have had enough oil, wouldn't they?

And so, again, what we've seen in these other teachings is people weren't prepared for Jesus' return. And so, as we end all that discourse, I just want to drive home what Jesus wants is for all of you to be prepared for His return, knowing that it could come at any moment.

[ 36 : 54 ] Are you prepared for that? When Jesus returns, our eternal destiny will be determined. There will be no changing. There will be no switching sides.

There will be no, oops, now I realize I should have believed this. It's too late in that moment. It will be eternally determined. There will be an eternal separation. It is a blessed existence for those who are trusted in Jesus Christ, and it is a cursed existence for those who are rejected Him.

Those are the very words that Jesus uses in this passage. Those who are blessed by the Father and those who are cursed by the Father. Secondly, I think this is a warning to those who profess to follow Jesus yet show no fruit.

Even as we saw James said, those who say they have faith but they don't show it by their words. Those who are without mercy.

Again, we're not saved by our words but they do indicate the condition, the state of our heart and our spiritual state. And so, again, be warned if you think you stand firm but you don't see any fruit in your life.

[ 38 : 05 ] Fruit is that evidence that God has worked in your heart. And if there's no fruit, go to the Lord now and put your faith and trust in Him. Thirdly, Christians should be encouraged that Christ will come, He will return as King of His kingdom which He has prepared from before the foundation of the world for His people.

What a glorious picture that is. We've spoken and we've seen already in Matthew that Jesus is even now seated on that throne. But up until this point, not every knee is bowed.

Not everyone knows His reign. Not everyone has acknowledged that reign but when Jesus returns, He will be seated on that throne and every knee will bow to Him and all will be judged.

But for the Christians, we ought to be encouraged that there's a kingdom over which Christ rules which has been prepared for us since the foundation of the world that will be our inheritance when He returns.

And so we long for Christ to return. We're eager to see Christ return. And as we think of eschatology and as we've gone through the Olivet Discourse and looked at this, the message that I see in the Olivet Discourse and what I see here is that this is all that remains for us.

[ 39 : 18 ] The next major eschatological moment in history is Jesus' return. That's what we long for. That's what we wait for. Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You that Jesus has come, that He has died, that He has resurrected, and that He is seated at Your right hand from which He reigns and from which one day He will judge the world.

Lord, we pray for all who are in this room that they would be prepared for that day. Lord, help us to take serious the words here that we would believe that this is true, that this judgment will one day happen, and that there will be none of us who are caught off guard, who are unprepared.

But even this day, if there's any in this room who have not trusted in Jesus Christ, that Your Spirit would work in their heart, that they would place their faith and trust in Him, and that they'd be counted as one of His sheep, that they'd be covered by His blood, and Lord, we pray that we would

enter into that eternal kingdom prepared for us from before the foundation of the world.  
Lord, we thank You for Your mercy, for Your grace, that we who have sinned against so great a God, who have rebelled against Him, yet could be made partakers of that kingdom by the blood of Christ and by being clothed in His righteousness.

We thank You and praise You for these things in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Our final hymn is number 318, and it anticipates the coming of Christ and the separation of all people.

[ 41 : 00 ] Number 318. Please stand. captive-se ■ One of Carol's secompense with the Monica and the people appears in one on." im For they heard sinners sing Thousands, thousands Sings attending To the blood of my heart Of their strength Hallelujah, hallelujah The love of yours For earth to reign Every eye shall now be open The wind and old majesty Close to sand and blood and soul In his hand and hand to the tree Deeply waving, deeply waving

Shall the true Messiah see Only I don't see and mountain And that earth shall flee away All who hate him must not forgive Hear our trouble in the day Come to judgment Come to judgment Come to judgment Come away Come to judgment Where redemption Lord is supremely Seeing so loud Come from here All his strength I have how ■ And rejected Now shall we Help him Lord is video In the air Hallelujah, hallelujah Alleluia, alleluia, see the joy of God of the earth.

Freedom and man, all adore thee, cry on thine eternal throne. Savior, take us power and glory, bring our kingdom for thy own.

O come with me, O come with me, alleluia, come, Lord come. Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and mind be to our God forever and ever. Amen.