

Sheep and Goats

Sermon by Pastor Rob McNutt

Jesus gives us 3 parables in Matthew Chapter 25 to really drive home the understanding that he is coming back and that day will be a day of reckoning.

All three parables deal with what will happen when He returns. But it relates to people in different ways.

- The first parable that we studied last week looks at what will be the fate of those who are ***Unprepared for His coming***,
- The second parable was the fate that will be of those who have been ***Ineffective in their work and will be judged upon his coming***.
- The third parable deals with people who are caught completely ***unaware of what was required of them*** and learn after it is too late....

Matthew 25:31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit 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? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

⁴⁰"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

⁴¹"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

⁴⁴"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

⁴⁵"He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

46"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Stories are very powerful. Jesus could have just said.

“Help your brother and sister when they are in need. If you don’t your not part of my kingdom.” But a story draws us in, it helps us relate to what is going on. The story impacts us emotionally and once we are made *to feel* we learn, and we apply the information to our lives.

Charles Dickens grew up in the 1800’s. His father mismanaged their finances and ended up in debtors prison. 10 year old Charles had to work to help support the family. He experienced a lot of poverty and injustice. He knew first-hand about being exploited and powerless. Charles took all those painful experiences and hard times and he used them as the content for his stories.

Stories that awakened the conscious of the British Empire and the industrialized nations. Stories that helped change the world. One of his the most popular stories that we love to hear every Christmas is of course “A Christmas Carol.”

In “A Christmas Carol” Dickens brings to life the infamously stingy Ebenezer Scrooge. Dickens character description of scrooge is so powerful that the name itself is synonymous with a greedy, self serving, uncaring person. If you say “stop being a scrooge” everyone knows what that is.

How many people watched some version of it this past Christmas? It’s one of our Christmas traditions. I’m kind of partial to the Muppet version myself.

The unmistakable message Dickens is trying to get across to his audience is that ***we have a moral responsibility to care for our fellow man. That love and benevolence can change lives.***

It can change the lives of people in need like Tiny Tim, AND it can change the life of the person who practices giving and sharing with other.

Scrooge of course by the end of the tale is transformed.

While he doesn’t quote scripture, Dickens, illustrates through the ghost of Jacob Marley that there is some eternal punishment for being a greedy, self serving, uncaring person.

Powerful scene. Vivid imagery, Mr. Dickens.

Or is it more then imagery?

More then good story telling?

Reread verses 31-46

It seems to me Charles Dickens gained his philosophy, his idea of eternal punishment for not caring for ones fellow man from a very reliable source.

The scholars classify this passage as a parable. But the more that I think about it, I don’t know if it’s meant to be a parable.

Observe 25:1, it says ¹"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like" Jesus clearly communicates that he's using imagery as a means of teaching us something about the kingdom of heaven.

Again in verse 14 "it is like."

But verse 31 he is describing a literal scene. 31-33

He "will sit" all the nations "will be" gathered.

That's not a story told for comparison... that is **prophecy**, foretelling about something that is actually going to transpire.

He doesn't use the imagery until he gets to the part concerning the separating.

"He will separate them" actual literal event, "as a shepherd separates sheep from goats." There's the only imagery in the passage, it's used to illustrate the action of separating. So that the people can visualize the scene. They've seen separating done before. The Shepherd separating the sheep and goats is something common to their experience.

Why does a shepherd separate the sheep from the goats?

- **Sheep** are gentle, quiet and easily led animals. **Goats** on the other hand are pushy, self-sufficient, and headstrong.
- Most **goats** are naturally horned, but many **sheep** breeds are polled or naturally hornless. Those goat horns can be used to bring harm to another goat or another animal or even a person.
- **Goats** are naturally quarrelsome and have short tempers.
- They rear and butt in order to establish dominance. Rather than being a passive animal like the sheep, they have more aggressive tendencies.
- **Goats** do not require as much supervision or care as sheep. Perhaps this is because they are a more independent animal.
- Unlike sheep, **goats** will easily revert back to their wild conditions if given the chance.
- **Goats** do not graze like sheep do, but instead browse. They nibble here and there, sampling a variety of bushes and leaves. Because they are browsers and do not graze, they tend to wander when they eat.
- **Goats** also like the high places, often heading upward. They are not herded as well as sheep because they would rather lead than follow.
- Typically, a shepherd in Palestine allowed sheep and goats to mingle together during the day. But at night, he separated the sheep from the goats through his unique call. The **sheep** would sleep in the open air, while the **goats** needed the heat of close quarters.

Why did Matthew use the images of sheep (for the righteous) and goats (for the evil)? Ancient people drew moral analogies from the habits of sheep and goats. Sheep were intelligent, yet quiet animals, submissive, yet persistent. Male sheep fiercely protected their harems from challengers. Sheep arrange themselves in a herd. In the face of danger, the adult males would surround the females and the young.

In a culture that encouraged loud debate and social one-upmanship, contemporaries of Jesus admired sheep for their loyalty and silent strength. Goats, however, were stubborn, destructive animals if left unattended. Male goats did not protect their mates from other males. The name "goat" became a derogatory term for a man shamed by the adultery of his wife.

In the folklore of the general Greek culture, the goat symbolized the loose morals of the lesser gods, Pan, Bacchus, and Aphrodite. So, Jews hated the symbol of the goat, for it represented a disobedient, undisciplined lifestyle.

So that's a bit of the cultural background behind the sheep, goat imagery
But the action of separating in and of itself is not imagery, it is an actual event.

The sheep are the people of God. People who are part of his family and because they are family they inherit the kingdom.
How do you know they are family? Well, like sheep, they care about the flock, they take care of their brother! 35-40

³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit 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? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

⁴⁰"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'"

I was at Subway in Leonardtown one evening a few weeks back. It was a cold night and a young man was sitting outside, as I walked by he asked me if I was heading to Baltimore. I said "sorry" and I went inside.

I was grateful to be inside because even though I had a coat on it was cold. I turned around and looked at that kid sitting outside he had a duffle bag but he didn't have a coat on. I figured if he had one he'd be wearing it.

"He's in for a long night" I thought! There was no way I could get him to Baltimore but I could get him out of the cold for a few moments so I stuck my head back out the door and asked if he wanted something to eat. He came in and I got him a subway meal.

His name was Tim, he was from Georgia and was traveling up to see his sister in Baltimore. He had gotten picked up and driven to Leonardtown. He was in MD so he figured he was close to Baltimore. I asked him if he needed a coat and he said another fellow was going to bring him one. By the time we got through the line, his buddy with

the coat returned and was going to take him farther up the road closer to Baltimore. He thanked me for the sandwich and was on his way. That's all I know about him.

I've done that from time to time, and whenever I run into someone like that who needs a hand I always think that maybe someday it will be my kid who's stuck trying to get some place. I won't be around to help them but hopefully someone will show them some kindness and give them a hand.

Some day the favor will be repaid on my boys.

The greatest compliment you can give a person, the greatest way you can bless someone is to show goodness to their children.

When people talk good about my kids it really blesses me. When people compliment my boys or do something to encourage them I always think highly of that person.

Likewise when someone discredits or degrades my children, they quickly get on my bad side.

Here's the thing, **God so loved everyone in the world so much that he was willing to come to earth as a baby and die on the cross for all these people who he loves.**

He feels so strongly about you, he loves you so much, that if you were the only person on the planet he would have come and died for you.

Those of us who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ death on the cross and glorious resurrection from the grave, become the children of God.

John 1:12 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become children of God, even to them who believe in His name:

I've put my faith and trust in Jesus Christ the son of God who loves me and gave himself for me, if you have done the same then you are my brother you are my sister.

We have been adopted into God's family. We are sons of God brothers with Christ.

Gal 4:4-7

4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Jesus said in Matt 12:50 **For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister.**

At Christmas time we want to be with our families, we want to eat with our families we want to give gifts to our families. New Clothes, things they need, things they want we want to bless our families WHY?

Because we love them, and we show that love by giving generously to them, providing for their needs and even giving them more than their needs, giving abundantly above need, giving them things they want.

We do that as a way of showing love to our families. Jesus is showing us here that he wants us to love each other in this manner. To provide for and bless those who are part of the family. Like the sheep who stick together and protect each other... that is how Jesus wants his family to be.

If we are believing in Jesus, if we are part of his family we will do this.

“So what you’re saying Pastor Rob and what Jesus is sayingis if we help out our fellow man then we will get into the family of God and into the kingdom??”

No, don’t confuse the order.

What I’m saying is if you are part of the family you will want to help care for the family.

The works is not what saves you... the works are the evidence of your salvation.

It is the characteristics of those who are in the family.

It’s what the sheep do!

The goats on the other hand. They assume they are in the flock, they assume they are going to be in the kingdom...BUT.

Verse 41-45

⁴¹"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

⁴⁴"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

⁴⁵"He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

Everyone thinks they are getting into the kingdom, but Jesus clearly shows us that some people are completely unaware of the fact that they are lacking.

Faith looks like something folks.

There is a life, a work, a standard, a higher calling that we have all be given as the people of God. As Jesus said - Matt 12:50 - we are **to do the will of the father**.

Faith and Obedience are like the two parallel railroad tracks upon which the train rides along to its destination. Faith and obedience is what guides us as children of God to our heavenly home.

Everyone wants to be part of the kingdom of heaven, everyone is claiming to have faith. James 2:14-18

14 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,

16 and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

18 But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

James 2 and Matt 25 are what we call “warning passages!”

Warning passages are very sobering, they make us uncomfortable, they make us feel unsettled, they make us evaluate ourselves ask hard questions?

Am I in the kingdom?What if I’m not?

That would be terrible to be one of those people who assume they’re getting into heaven only to find out your going to be cast into hell.

Jesus is telling us of the most devastating thing that could ever happen to an individual.

It’s scary, troubling to imagine!

Good - It needs to be! We all need to search our own souls, measure ourselves up to what the BIBLE says faith and obedience is, not what we assume it is.

It not about if YOU say you’re in the kingdom or not, it’s about if THE KING says your in the kingdom.

You can say it all you want, However if the KING says you are then you are, But if the King says you’re not, ...then you’re not!

Don’t be caught unaware as who he says is in!

That would be the worst fate of all.

In Dickens story, Scrooge heeded the warnings, of the three ghost of Christmas and changed his ways. It wasn’t to late for him. But he dared not wait.

We too, everyone here today, at this moment, has the opportunity to heed the warning of Jesus.

You have time to repent of your sin and confess to the Lord your need of his salvation.

Once you’ve done so you will be filled with the Holy Spirit and he will prompt you, he will impress upon you what you need to do to be obedient.

If you have been or are being disobedient you have this moment to commit yourself to be obedient to his word.

And you have the opportunity, the blessing, the privilege to study and learn God’s word so that you will know the will of God.

That is our whole goal here at Faith Bible Church to help you understand God’s word and to help guide you in your personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

For on The Day when the Son of Man comes in all his Glory and sits on the throne in his kingdom we ALL want to hear verse 34.

34"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

None of us want to hear Ver 41.

41"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

We do not want anyone to be caught completely unaware of how to enter the kingdom of heaven.