

### **In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

<sup>31</sup> “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. <sup>32</sup> All 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. <sup>33</sup> He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

<sup>34</sup> “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. <sup>35</sup> 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 invited me in, <sup>36</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

<sup>37</sup> “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

<sup>40</sup> “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.’

<sup>41</sup> “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. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I 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.’

<sup>44</sup> “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?’

<sup>45</sup> “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.’

<sup>46</sup> “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

**This is God’s Word.**

**Dear members of the flock,**

There is a popular hymn that many of you know, “*I am Jesus Little Lamb.*” It would sound pretty strange if that title was changed to “*I am Jesus Little Goat.*” The 1<sup>st</sup> thing that always comes to mind when I hear our sermon text is, “I don’t want to be a goat.” I want to be a lamb and I want Jesus as my Shepherd.

Jesus used this contrast between sheep and goats as an illustration to give us a glimpse of Judgment Day. Over the past few weeks we have heard some of the parables that Jesus shared on Tuesday of what we call Holy Week and yet we know that the teaching ministry of Jesus was about to end as he prepared for his death and suffering that would take place in just a few days on the cross. And so, he gives us this “**Final Vision of His Return,**” Jesus explains how “**The Son of Man will come in His Glory,**” “**He tells us the words that will be heard when he comes again,**” and “**Jesus gives us a Promise to Keep Us until the Last Day.**”

**I. “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.”** This is quite a different picture from Jesus’ first coming when he came in humility – born in a stable and living a life of poverty. Then suffering and dying the

death of the worst of criminals to pay for our sins. But Paul in his letter to the Philippians reminds us that Christ has been exalted. **“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,<sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”** (Philippians 2:9-11)

His glory will be evident to all as he sits on his throne – a symbol of majesty and power and authority. He won’t be alone. All the angels will attend him. In our Old Testament lesson, Daniel said, **“Thousands upon thousands attended him,”** (Daniel 7:10). We know that the angels will gather the nations before him. Again Daniel describes these nations as, **“Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.”** (Daniel 7:10). Not literal numbers but figurative numbers that tell us there will more people than the eye can see. Jesus said, **“All the nations will be gathered before him.”**

This includes anyone that has ever lived or ever will live. The Final Day of Judgment will include all the living and the dead. There will be no absences and no excuse on that day. Even the people who have blown themselves up into thousands of pieces, or the person who has been cremated and had their ashes scattered over the ocean, or the people of Hiroshima or Nagasaki who were incinerated by an atomic explosion. Everyone will stand before the throne. There is no escaping this final gathering of all people.

Then the sorting will take place. Jesus gives us a picture of a shepherd separating the sheep from the goats. A simple task for any shepherd because, other than size, these two animals are quite different. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, seeing into the hearts of all people, will quickly put the believers – those with faith – on his right and the unbelievers – those lacking any faith – on his left. This separating process already an announcement of judgment.

**II. Then the King speaks 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.<sup>35</sup> 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 invited me in,<sup>36</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”**

**<sup>37</sup> “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ <sup>40</sup> “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’”**

Notice that he didn’t say you have to go out and heal the sick and free the prisoner. He didn’t say you have to perform great miracles or do great things. He lists things that we can do. Feed the hungry. That might include helping a friend in need with some groceries or cooking them a meal or giving to the food bank. Be friendly to a stranger. Talk to someone you don’t know. Even here at church, don’t let someone stand around by themselves – befriend them. Maybe give a fellow member a ride if needed to church or someplace else.

Clothe the naked. In other words share some clothes with those in need. Give mittens and hats to the group that hangs them on the sledding hill fence or if you have kids clothes, pass them

on to someone else who can use them. Share a winter coat with someone less fortunate. Help those who are sick. Take them a meal or give them a ride to the doctor's office or go pick up a prescription for them. Help clean their house. There are a lot of ways we can share the love of Jesus that is in our hearts.

These works don't save us but they are evidence of the faith in a person's heart. Notice the answer of those who were commended for these things. When did we do this? That shows us how a Christian reflects the love of Christ in what they do so much so, that it comes naturally as a fruit of faith to want to help people in this way. And when you reflect the love of God by helping someone, it is the same as showing love towards God himself.

But those on the left saw life in a different light. **“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. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I 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.’**

**<sup>44</sup> “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?’ <sup>45</sup> “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.’”**

These folks thought they were doing well but weren't interested in the people around them. They were focused on themselves. Even though the unbeliever might have done some good things in life, without faith it is impossible to please God. Since the love of God was not in their hearts they would not feel his love on this day of final judgment. They would be judged according to their actions and fall far short of the payment needed for their sins. They would join the devil and his evil angels in hell.

**III.** We have so many opportunities to let our faith shine and it isn't hard. But we also have the temptation to focus on ourselves and forget about anyone else. Our human nature – that is our sinful nature – is quite selfish. But thank God that our judge was tempted in every way just as we are but was without sin. Thank God that our judge loved us so much that he paid for all the times our sinful nature took us down the wrong path. Thank God that even though we have fallen short many times, Jesus sacrifice was all-sufficient to pay for our sins. Thank God for the Holy Spirit who gives us the gift of faith so that we can receive the benefits of what Jesus has done for us.

So lend a hand to those in need. Our God has not given us an insurmountable task but rather joyful opportunities to let our faith shine. Once you start, it becomes easier to let your faith shine without even thinking about it.

The final part of Christ's vision is that the righteous will have eternal life. That is our goal – eternal life in heaven with our Lord. That is God's promise for all those who believe and trust in Jesus. This is a sure promise of God that is for all believers. We can count on it.

*“I am Jesus Little Lamb”* is a great hymn that reminds us we are part of God's flock of believers and we will be on the right side when it comes to Judgment Day. That is a day we don't have to worry about because Christ has taken care of everything for our salvation and has given us the gift of faith so that we can live for him now and look forward to future when we will live with him forever in heaven. Amen.