

JUDGMENT DAY--THE WHEN

The Day when faith is revealed -- The Day when our glory begins Matthew 25:31-46

TEXT: *When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 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. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "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. 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, 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.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "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.' "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. I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 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.' "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?' "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.' "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Judgment Day! The End of the World! We know from Jesus' own words that ***No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*** Mt 24 We also know from Jesus' own words that we should be ready for that moment in time by living lives of repentance and faith, for as Jesus said: ***Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. Therefore keep watch...*** Mt 24 Today, from Jesus' own words, we also know that for us, Judgment Day will be a wonderful moment WHEN: Faith is revealed, and our glory begins.

No one can see true saving faith in Christ. It's in the heart and it is a substance that only God can see. So WHEN Jesus comes, that faith will be revealed before the eyes of all the world. He says: ***When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 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. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.*** Just that quick and easy. With the power of his creative word, all souls ever conceived in the face of this earth since the creation of man will be reunited with their resurrected bodies and be separated into two groups. Those who died in faith are called "Sheep," and those who died in impenitence and unbelief are called "Goats."

There, that's it! The judgment will have occurred without any opportunity to change one's mind and heart. There will be no argument, discussion, explanation or excuse, for there they stand: either a sheep or a goat. It's as Paul writes: ***For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.*** Ro 14 But there we will stand, either on his left among the goats, or on his right among sheep. If anyone would think that he has done what is necessary to be saved he will be shocked to find himself among the goats. Jesus warns: ***Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'*** Mt 7 But for those who lived and died in faith will be saved.

Since faith is invisible, and since I cannot even see my own faith, how can I be certain that I have true saving faith? How can I be certain that I am not one of those false Christians who will cry out on Judgment Day ***'Lord, Lord...*** The answer is to have God himself tell you that you are a sheep. And God does NOT talk to you through your feelings that you are close to him, but only through his Word and Sacraments.

Through his written word Jesus declares: *Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* Jn 3 Through his Lord's Supper, Jesus gives us bread and wine and his actual body and blood for us to eat and to drink and declares: This is for you... yes, you, for the forgiveness of your sins. Concerning your baptism, it is written: ... *baptism ... saves you also-not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand-with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.* 1Pe 3 Jesus himself declared: *I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.* And then he asked a woman named Martha: *Do you believe this? "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."* Jn 11 Only you and your Lord know if you believe all of what is written in the Gospel and received by the power of God's Word in the water, the bread and the wine.

But on Judgment Day, what is today in your heart will be revealed publicly as you are suddenly called a "Sheep" and are standing on the Lord's right hand. And when that happens, then also will begin your glorification.

Did you also notice that when Jesus begins to speak to the Sheep he calls them "The Righteous?" With sin forgiven, so is its curse removed. That will be clearly seen by our resurrected bodies, now glorified and beautified. Paul writes: *Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: Death has been swallowed up in victory.* 1 Co 15 Beautiful, glorious bodies, created and built by the Lord to enjoy the wonders of heaven for ever and ever.

Not so the Goats! They will rise from their graves still in their sins, and that will be reflected in their bodies still under its curse. They will stand and stare at you wondering why you get to stand there and be called "righteous" when they had no understanding of God's Word and no faith in it. Instead they scoffed at worship and the Gospel, despising preaching and the sacraments.

While we know that we are not saved by our good works, John does write: *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.* "Yes," says the Spirit, *they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.* Re 14 And so, in front of everyone, Jesus will begin to glorify your good works. With your sins forgiven, and through faith in Christ's righteousness, God sees only holy people doing works of faith. Jesus will proclaim these good works. We will stand in glorious wonderment because all of our lives on earth, all we did was confess our sins and plead for Jesus' mercy. Jesus says we will reply: *'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' '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.'* Your deeds are following you, starting today and to continue throughout eternity.

Not so the Goats! Seeing and hearing this they will argue that they did just as much. They will argue that it's not their fault since they didn't know that it was Jesus whom they were to glorify by living lives of love to him and to others. Jesus says they will cry: *'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?' '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.'* Without faith in the forgiveness of sins and the heart of repentance that such faith produces, that person is on his own, to argue his own case before God. But there they stand, among the Goats to whine and complain under God's wrath and punishment forever and ever. For Jesus clearly says: *Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.*

With every tick of the clock, this glorious day is coming closer and closer. If it does not come before we die, then it is with our last breath on earth that we pray with David: *Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.* Ps 51 And then let us close our eyes only to open them in heaven where we will pray with the saints already there for coming of the blessed day of Judgment when... Our faith will be revealed and our glory will begin. Amen