

Sermon Notes Mt. 25:31-46. True Disciples

20/03/2022

Introduction. Leading up to chapter 25 in Matthew's gospel there have been a number of passages which have focused on the certainty of the return of Christ, and the need for his disciples to be ready for his return. This readiness is characterised by being active disciples every day, using every moment to serve Christ in his world.

Mt. 25:31-46 – overview.

- a. This passage continues these themes of the return of Christ and the need to be constantly ready by serving others, especially those in need.
- b. This teaching brings us face to face with our Judge by focussing on three great realities:
 - i. **The Son of Man will return in glory.** He will return suddenly, unexpectedly, and decisively. It will be the end of human history and will determine human destiny.
 - ii. **The Son of Man has come, but not as expected.** He came and identified himself with the poor and needy, with sinners.
 - iii. **The Son of Man will come to judge all people.**

Judgement.

- a. The Son of Man's judgement will bring a terrible and eternal separation. 'Sheep and goats' - those who have been blessed by God, and whose inheritance has been prepared since the creation of the world (vs. 34), are separated from those who are cursed and are destined for eternal fire (vs. 41).
- b. This separation implies God's prior calling and shows how people's actions reflect who they are – Jesus' disciples or his enemies. **Two important paradoxical truths** are being taught in this passage: **1. The priority of God's grace** and **2. The need for a response to God's grace through faith, repentance and obedient behaviour.** The initial focus is on serving Jesus' disciples – 'whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' (vs. 40). However, the word to those who failed to care seems to widen the service to all in need - 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' Also, the response of the faithful disciples (44) shows that they acted without knowing who it was they were caring for.

Reflection - Personal response.

1. It tells me I am accountable to God for how I live my life.
 2. It tells me that judgement awaits everyone, there will be no exceptions.
 3. It tells me that we are not all going in the same direction.
 4. It tells me that there will be great surprises on that day.
 5. It tells me that the heart of Christianity is a relationship with Jesus, which shows itself in loving, sacrificial care for his followers and others who are poor and in need. **Responding together.**
- How do we know God has blessed us and that we are recipients of His grace?
How is it a great reassurance that God's grace is prior to our response of trust in Him?
Why does a life of serving others in Christ's name matter, and how does it reveal a Christlike attitude?
Discuss how a life of service is only possible with God's enabling and empowering grace and how this shows a growth in Christlikeness?

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