

"FROM NOW UNTIL THEN"
MATTHEW 25:31-46
LAST S. IN THE CHURCH YEAR
MESSIAH, BOERNE
NOVEMBER 26, 2023

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY
SPIRIT. AMEN.

READ TEXT: "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. . . . I TELL
YOU THE TRUTH, WHATEVER YOU DID FOR ONE OF THE
LEAST OF THESE BROTHERS OF MINE, YOU DID FOR
ME'" (VV 34, 40).

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST:

AS A PERSON GROWS OLDER, HE OR SHE LEARNS THAT
EVALUATION OF HIS OR HER PERFORMANCE IS A REGULAR PART OF
LIFE. FOR EXAMPLE, AS A CHILD MOVES THROUGH GRADES 1 TO 12
IN SCHOOL, HE OR SHE WILL PROBABLY BE EVALUATED A MINIMUM
OF 48 TO 72 TIMES BY HIS OR HER TEACHERS. ONCE THEY GET A
JOB, THEIR PERFORMANCE WILL PROBABLY BE EVALUATED BY THEIR
BOSS AT LEAST ONCE OR TWICE A YEAR, MAYBE MORE. AND WHEN
THEY GET MARRIED, AS THE END OF THE MONTH COMES AROUND,
HUSBAND AND WIFE WILL HOPEFULLY GATHER AROUND THE KITCHEN
TABLE AND EVALUATE THEIR SPENDING IN RELATION TO THE FAMILY
BUDGET. THUS, WE SEE THAT EVALUATION IS A VERY IMPORTANT
PART OF LIFE.

IN THE BIBLE, JESUS TELLS US THAT EVALUATION IS ALSO

AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR LIFE WITH HIM. AS THE CHURCH YEAR NEARS ITS END, THE LESSONS REMIND US THAT WE ARE LIVING BETWEEN THE FIRST AND SECOND COMINGS OF CHRIST. OUR GOSPEL LESSON TODAY RAISES THE ISSUE OF *HOW* WE ARE TO LIVE DURING THIS TIME, THESE LAST DAYS. AT THE END OF TIME, GOD WILL EVALUATE US, AND SOME PEOPLE "WILL GO AWAY TO ETERNAL PUNISHMENT, BUT THE RIGHTEOUS TO ETERNAL LIFE" (V 46). SINCE JESUS WANTS *ALL* PEOPLE TO SPEND ETERNITY WITH HIM IN HEAVEN, HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT HOW WE USE OUR TIME IN LIGHT OF WHO *HE* IS, WHO *WE* ARE, AND WHAT IS *TRULY AND ETERNALLY WORTHWHILE TO DO* IN LIFE. POINTING TO OUR FINAL EVALUATION ON JUDGMENT DAY, JESUS TELLS US HOW WE ARE TO LIVE UNTIL HE COMES AGAIN VISIBLY FROM HEAVEN—*FROM NOW UNTIL THEN*.

FIRST OF ALL, WE ARE TO LIVE EACH DAY IN OUR BAPTISMAL GRACE AS HEIRS OF ETERNAL LIFE. BEFORE HE RETURNED TO HEAVEN, JESUS GAVE THIS COMMAND: "MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND TEACHING THEM TO OBEY EVERYTHING I HAVE COMMANDED YOU" (28:19-20a). BY HIS WORD AND IN HOLY BAPTISM GOD HAS MADE US HEIRS OF HIS ETERNAL INHERITANCE IN HEAVEN. WE ARE HIS CHILDREN, BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST. WE HAVE RECEIVED FORGIVENESS OF SINS, ABUNDANT LIFE, AND SALVATION IN JESUS'

NAME. AND THAT SAME "SON OF MAN" WHO CAME FROM HEAVEN, LIVED, SUFFERED, DIED, ROSE AGAIN, AND THEN WENT BACK TO HEAVEN, *WILL COME AGAIN* TO RESTORE US FULLY TO HIMSELF.

WHEN CHRIST COMES AT THE END OF TIME, "AND ALL THE ANGELS WITH HIM," OUR TEXT SAYS, "HE WILL SIT ON HIS THRONE IN HEAVENLY GLORY" (V 31). THEN, AS OUR GREAT HEAVENLY KING, HE WILL EXERCISE JUDGEMENT OVER *ALL* THE PEOPLES OF THE EARTH. ALL THE NATIONS, THAT IS, PEOPLE GROUPS, WILL BE GATHERED BEFORE HIM, AND HE WILL SEPARATE THE PEOPLE AS A SHEPHERD SEPARATES THE SHEEP FROM THE GOATS. HE WILL PUT THE SHEEP ON HIS RIGHT AND THE GOATS ON HIS LEFT (VV 31-33). HIS PURPOSE IN JUDGEMENT IS TO GIVE GREAT AND ETERNAL BLESSINGS TO THE BLESSED OF HIS FATHER ON HIS RIGHT HAND, THOSE WHO HAVE RECEIVED HIS ETERNAL INHERITANCE THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST, AND TO PUNISH ETERNALLY THOSE ON HIS LEFT HAND, THOSE WHO HAVE REJECTED HIS GRACIOUS INHERITANCE PROMISED IN HIS WORD THROUGH HOLY BAPTISM (VV 34, 41).

UNTIL THEN WE ARE TO LIVE AS GOD'S HEIRS BY HELPING OTHER PEOPLE. JESUS CLARIFIES IN OUR TEXT HOW HE WILL BE ABLE TO EVALUATE PEOPLE WHEN HE RETURNS—HOW HE WILL BE ABLE TO DETERMINE WHO ARE SHEEP RATHER THAN GOATS, WHO ARE TO BE AT HIS RIGHT HAND RATHER THAN HIS LEFT, WHO WILL INHERIT THE KINGDOM RATHER THAN GO INTO ETERNAL FIRE. HE WILL

EVALUATE THEM ON THE BASIS OF WHETHER THEY ARE "BLESSED" THROUGH FAITH IN HIM OR NOT. THE BLESSED OF HIS FATHER, WHO ARE CALLED THE RIGHTEOUS ONES, ARE THOSE WHO ARE EASILY RECOGNIZED BECAUSE THEY GAVE FOOD TO THE HUNGRY AND DRINK TO THE THIRSTY, BECAUSE THEY GAVE SHELTER TO THE HOMELESS AND CLOTHES TO THOSE POORLY CLAD, BECAUSE THEY LOOKED AFTER THE SICK AND VISITED THOSE IN PRISON.

THE SCRIPTURES MAKE IT CLEAR WHO ARE BLESSED BY THE FATHER AND WHO HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE INHERITANCE OF HEAVEN. THEY ARE *THE RIGHTEOUS ONES* WHO ARE RIGHTEOUS IN THE ONLY WAY PEOPLE CAN BE COUNTED RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD—BY TRUSTING IN THE SON OF MAN, JESUS CHRIST, AS THEIR SAVIOR. JESUS CAME INTO OUR WORLD NOT TO BE SERVED BUT TO SERVE AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR MANY (VV 34-36; 20:28). ON THE CROSS OF CALVARY, CHRIST PAID FOR OUR SINS AND ESTABLISHED A RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS OURS BY FAITH. BY BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST, THE BLESSED HAVE A NEW RELATIONSHIP OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WITH GOD. THEY ARE CHRIST'S BROTHERS AND SISTERS, GOD IS THEIR HEAVENLY FATHER, AND THEY SIMPLY LIVE OUT THEIR FAITH BY HELPING OTHERS, "ESPECIALLY . . . THOSE WHO BELONG TO THE FAMILY OF BELIEVERS" (GAL 6:10).

YOU SEE, WE CHRISTIANS ARE TO LIVE *FROM NOW UNTIL THEN*

WITH A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IN CHRIST JESUS. WE ARE GOD'S FAMILY—CHILDREN OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER, AND BROTHERS AND SISTERS THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST. WE HAVE BEEN DECLARED RIGHTEOUS BY GOD, AND JESUS' WORDS IN THE GOSPEL LESSON CLEARLY SHOW HOW THE RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD DEMONSTRATE AND LIVE OUT THEIR NEW STANDING BEFORE GOD. THEY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT PROVIDING FOR THE NEEDS OF OTHERS, AND THEY PUT THAT CONCERN INTO ACTION, ESPECIALLY FOR OTHERS IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, BUT ALSO FOR OTHER PEOPLE LIVING IN THE WORLD.

JESUS INSTRUCTS US AS THOSE WHO TRUST IN HIM AS THE SON OF MAN, GOD'S PROMISED SAVIOR, HOW TO LIVE *FROM NOW UNTIL THEN*, FROM THE PRESENT DAY UNTIL THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT. CHRIST TELLS US WHAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT IN LIFE, AND THEN DIRECTS US HOW WE ARE TO USE THE TIME GOD HAS GIVEN. WE ARE TO SUPPLY THE NEEDS OF THE HUNGRY, THE THIRSTY, THE STRANGER, THE POORLY CLAD, THE SICK AND THE IMPRISONED. WE ARE TO DO SO, NOT BECAUSE WE THINK WE WILL BE SAVED BY SO DOING, BUT AS A FRUIT OF OUR SAVING FAITH IN THE SON OF MAN. AS LUTHER SAID, A TREE, THAT IS, A PERSON, IS GOOD BECAUSE GOD *MAKES IT GOOD* BY HIS SPIRIT, THROUGH FAITH IN HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST. THEN THAT PERSON SIMPLY PRODUCES GOOD FRUIT, THAT IS, DOES GOOD WORKS, AS A RESULT

OR PRODUCT OF THEIR NEW LIFE IN CHRIST.

SO IMPORTANT IS THIS NEW LIFE OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE THAT JESUS VIEWS IT AS DONE TO HIM. WHEN WE SERVE OTHERS, WE ARE SERVING HIM WHO FIRST SERVED US. TO HIS HEARERS JESUS SAID, "I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, WHATEVER YOU DID FOR ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE BROTHERS OF MINE, YOU DID FOR ME" (V 40). INDEED, WE SERVE CHRIST BY SERVING OTHERS BECAUSE HE SO WONDERFULLY SERVED US. THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT JESUS TAUGHT HIS FIRST DISCIPLES. HE DIRECTED THEM TO SERVE OTHERS AND REMINDED THEM THAT THEY COULD DO SO BECAUSE HE HAD SERVED THEM TO THE FULLEST. HE HAD COME INTO THE WORLD AND GIVEN HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM TO BUY THEM BACK FROM SIN, DEATH, AND HELL. AND SO IT IS WITH US TODAY BY THE GRACE AND GOODNESS OF GOD (20:24-28). WE ARE SERVANTS OF EACH OTHER FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST, NEXT WEEK THE CHURCH YEAR BEGINS AGAIN, AND WE WILL FOCUS ON CHRIST'S *FIRST* COMING IN ALL HUMILITY. TODAY, HOWEVER, THE PICTURE OF CHRIST'S *SECOND* COMING, WRAPPED IN CLOUDS OF MAJESTY, SHOULD TERRIFY ALL WHO STAND ALONE IN THEIR OWN MERITS. YET THE FAITHFUL DO NOT TREMBLE, FOR THEY HAVE BEEN EVALUATED BY THE FATHER ON THE BASIS OF THEIR BROTHER JESUS' RIGHTEOUSNESS. THEY KNOW THAT, WHILE IN ONE SENSE THIS LOOKS LIKE A DIFFERENT

CHRIST, IN A MOST BASIC WAY, THIS IS THE SAME JESUS WHO
CAME ONCE IN LOVE TO SAVE US, AND WHO WILL COME AGAIN IN
LOVE TO TAKE US TO OUR HEAVENLY HOME. SO, HOW SHALL WE
LIVE UNTIL HE COMES AGAIN? DO WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN ENABLED
TO DO BY JESUS—SERVE OTHERS WITH THE LOVE WITH WHICH HE HAS
LOVED YOU AND IN THE BLESSEDNESS WITH WHICH HE HAS BLESSED
YOU—*FROM NOW UNTIL THEN. AMEN.*