

## **“You are a very special person” Mat 25:31-46**

**"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers,<sup>1</sup> you did it to me.'"**  
**"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."**

This is the last Sunday on our Church year. You know that throughout the year we go through all the most important events in the life on our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We begin with His birth, then life, sufferings and death, His resurrection, ascension and now end with His return in glory and power.

That's why for the last few weeks we have been meditating upon the Last Day, upon the return of Christ, about the Day of Judgement. Today we have one more section of Jesus address where He describes what is going to happen.

Today we'll look at these Jesus words and will try to see how they apply to us. We'll try to answer these three questions. First, how can we inherit God's Kingdom? Second, what is the place for good works in our lives. Third, where to get motivation. How can we inherit God's Kingdom, place for good works and where to get motivation.

Yesterday we had quite a thunderstorm here in Barossa. How many of you did see it? These dark and spooky clouds, lighting after lighting, thunder so powerful that

you could feel the earth shaking. Daniels, our youngest run out and was jumping and clapping hands... “Jesus is coming, Jesus is coming...”

He wasn't coming yet. Unfortunately. But when we experience these mighty thunderstorms we can get at least a little glimpse of what the return of Christ may be like. Row power. Absolute, terrifying power. Infinitely surpassing anything we could imagine.

Try to imagine, someone to whom the laws of the Universe bow down. It is not simply coming of someone who is very influential, it is coming of Someone to whom the laws of creation will obey.

To whom everything that we perceive as the very fabric and structure of cosmos will listen like this... The world as we know it will be changed. All that has been foundational and unshakable, that gave us the sense of peace and stability will be changed.

But the scariest part will be that this Someone will come to gather us before His throne. All of us, all nations will be gathered before Him and... separation will begin. He Himself will separate us as the sheep from the goats.

There is not something intrinsically good or bad about the sheep or the goats. The point Jesus is making is simple. It require quite an expertise to separate one from another.

It means that Christ will be the only one who is able to see who is a sheep and who is a goat. Today we don't see it yet. It is not up to us, to made this kind of judgment. Nevertheless, as we meditate on how Jesus described His return, it is a good time for us to reflect on our lives. How well we have lived them?

A few good things that we have done in our lives don't make a big difference when our hearts and thoughts are weighted and when our rebellion against God and our disobedience to His holy will is exposed.

So what to do about it? Is there anything? Can we try to be better people from this day on? We can try, sure, but we can't change what we have done and what we are. Therefore... let just read once more what Jesus said.

‘The Son of Man’ will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’

Let's move from this scary picture of God's second coming to these words of Jesus. How wonderful and comforting are these words! This is what we can call the good news for us.

Yes, this is repeated again and again that the sheep will be separated from the goat. And we may be worried about to which category we will belong. And here Jesus tells, what the criteria for this separation are.

To those who are on the right hand Jesus the King will say: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

Did you hear this? Was there anything about what you have done? The point is simple - we don't earn our salvation by what we do. Your salvation is a gift of God the Father. ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father!’

He has prepared this kingdom for you from the foundation of the world. He knew what is going to happen. Our fall. Our rebellion. He knew it all. He knew that He Himself will bear the cost of our rebellion.

He knew also that He will seek for you, will bless you and that you will inherit His kingdom. Here is for you the answer to the question, how do you inherit God's Kingdom?

As all inheritance - it is simply given to you. But no inheritance goes just to someone, we may wonder... That's right. But you are not just someone. None of you. You are a very special person.

If you are baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and if God has put His name of you, if you have receive the gift of the Holy Spirit – then you are His child. This is who you are, God's child.

I know this sounds strange. It sounds too great and too mysterious for our minds to comprehend it fully. As are all things that our God does. But this is exactly what He says to you.

“I rescued you, I have made you my child, and I promise that I will give you the kingdom that I have prepared for you since the creation of the world.” And by saying ‘you’, He means ‘you’, each of you. Just receive these blessings of the Father.

Now, *what about these good works?* What about them? To state it once more - you receive inheritance not by what you do, but by what God does for us. You are brought into the Kingdom of God not by your works, but when you trust that Jesus has done everything so that you can inherit His Kingdom.

You are saved by faith alone, as we Lutherans phrase it. By faith alone, by trust in the Triune God. But... true faith is never alone. We are saved by faith alone, but true faith is never alone!

We are not saved by works, but where there is true faith, it will produce good works. I once read that faith was compared with calories. You don't see faith as you don't see calories. But you can see what effect they produce.

The same way our faith cannot remain without bearing fruit. Remember, as Jesus told, those who inherited God's kingdom were surprised, they didn't even know that they have done all these things.

How could this be? Very simple. When the Holy Spirit dwells with you, He turns your eyes towards your brothers and sisters, He moves you to look at their needs and to help them.

When you look at what your neighbour needs, you don't look at yourself. Focus is on them, not on us. It is that simple. When you are blessed by the Father, you can care for others not reflecting how good you are by doing it.

If you don't reflect on what you do, you may not even notice all the good works that you have done. And there are so many things to be done. So many ways we can help our Lord to restore the brokenness of this world.

There are many who are hungry, there are many who are thirsty, there are many who are strangers, who need our help. Our Lord wants us to share what we have received from Him with those who are in need.

I recently read this funny line, it was meant as ridicule of our Western individualism. The author wrote. "I don't believe this global warming, for today I was so cold. I also think that global hunger is more or less solved, for I just ate."

It is very fitting description of what idol of self makes us to do. Trust, fear and love myself more than anything. But is this what the Father who blesses you expects from you? Of course, not.

This is a very opposite of what true faith do to us. It helps us to deny ourselves, and to think about others as more important. But sometimes it could be so difficult. Sometimes we want to care about us more than others.

Here we come to our last question - *where to get a motivation to do something?* May be these words can be helpful. "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."

God the Father doesn't need from us anything. That's for sure. Neither do Jesus or the Holy Spirit. The Triune God Himself gives to us everything.

But, our neighbours, these the least of Jesus brothers, they need our help. We can't return anything to God directly, but we can express our gratitude serving those in need.

When we see anyone in need, - hungry, thirsty, abandoned, stranger, suffering – we see Christ in them. That’s Him living in them. How? Because as the apostle Paul put it, He became poor so that we can become rich.

He emptied Himself till the death, till the death on the Cross, so that you can be rich and inherit fullness of all your dreams in God’s Kingdom. He did it all for you. For each of you.

Now you can participate in Jesus ministry. You can help Him to restore this fallen creation. By little things that we can do to those around us, who are in need.

You know what is the most beautiful part of it? When you serve others as if you were serving Christ, they will see Christ in you. They will see Christ in you. You will become little Christs for them.

That’s who you are, for you are the Church, the body of Christ. You are His hands to feed the hungry. You are His hands to embrace the strangers. You are His mouth to speak the words of forgiveness and peace, and to invite people into His Kingdom.

And one day, on the Last day, you will all stand together before the throne of glory, when Jesus the King says these words: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, and inherit the kingdom that is prepared for you!”

Amen.