

Matthew 25:31-46

2nd - Last Sunday in the Church Year

13 November 2016

St. John's, Chicago, IL

In the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

These past few weeks, many have joked repeatedly about the signs of the times. Some laughing for joy, others in disbelief, saying the Cubs and Indians World Series was a sign of Judgment Day, and the end would come at or before Game Seven. Others have detailed the political campaigns for president, and remarked at the final candidates were a sign of the end of the world.

Still others take advantage of the times, and try to persuade you to listen to their message, rather than God's. The saving Gospel of Christ crucified then gets hidden or shoved out of the picture, while something more appealing or lucrative comes to the forefront.

But beware, children of God! Do not let the goats of false prophets persuade you that you are not beloved sheep that belong to the Son of Man! You are His, and He has made you blessed and holy, receiving the gift of faith, and the blessings of His righteousness. And in faith, He makes you something very different from the goat that you were born as.

Yes, all people are just like the sheep and goats. The two groups may seem to have done the same actions and spoken the same words, yet there is a great difference.

One example of that difference is that the goats know full well what they have done, or they think they do. They have kept score. They make sure to get credit for every act of kindness or charitable gift. They might even view themselves as "religious" and spend much time and effort in helping others. But it is all lacking faith.

Faith is not a sport; you do not keep score. When one is baptized into Christ, and brought to faith, he does not do works of mercy in order to be thanked. He does not witness in order to be noticed. He does not work on the life together in the Church, just to be honored. When Jesus

says, ***“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,”*** and so on, the sheep have no clue that they have done these things. “When did we do that?!” In humility and awe, sheep simply live their lives in faith, and don’t realize the good that the Holy Spirit is doing through them.

Are you keeping score? Are you jealous and frustrated that you were not chosen for some promotion at work? Are you the least bit agitated that your name was accidentally omitted from a list of Thank You’s in the bulletin?

Stop. Repent of your self-importance and petty score keeping. Turn from the ledger you keep and the Pharisaical judgment that you are doing more than others. As you feel you have kept God’s commands and lived out good works better than others, you reject His grace and seek to trust yourself. So stop your love and trust in your works.

In His boundless love and mercy, the Lord has taken you, who once were goats, and like Baby Elsie today, baptized you into Christ the Good Shepherd, making you His sheep. He took you from the depths of score-keeping to the heights of Christ’s works made yours.

When He returns, you need not fear the Lord Jesus, for He is not judging you for all you have not done. Instead, He is praising you for all that He Himself has done through you, even while you were not even noticing. The Last Day is not the Day of Wrath for you who are in Christ. It is the Day of Fulfillment, when all is finished, and our Savior completes the good works He has begun in you.

You need not fear, because the final judgment began at the cross. There the weight of all sin was laid on Jesus. He bore our sin to be your Savior. And in becoming your Savior, He bore the weight of the death sentence that was yours. All the guilt and shame that gives you the guilty sentence was transferred to Him, and He paid the price in full.

There, Christ was crowned King, as the weight of the world’s sin hung on His shoulders. It looked like a disastrous, pitiful end, but the Lord Jesus was on the throne of His cross, receiving

the judgment of all of His subjects, that He could make His royal decree that, ***"It is finished!"*** and free you from your judgment.

The judgment has been made, the sentence given, and the punishment delivered. Now, on the Last Day -- Judgment Day, the publishing of the final judgment will show that the record is good and clean and perfect. You are "not guilty." In fact, you are righteous -- perfect before God, on account of His Son.

God the Father has kept track of the works of your Good Shepherd, and knows it is a pristine, blameless record. And He gives that holiness to you.

On That Day, He will separate those in Christ from those who have rejected Him -- the sheep from the goats. The perfect good works of Christ are given from the Shepherd to the sheep. And the goats have simply wandered from Him, not caring about Him or the righteousness He gives. They trust in their own scores and imaginary divine report cards. Yet our loving Lord is heart broken that they refuse the faith He wanted to give them, and the righteousness that accompanies it.

Fear not, dear sheep in Christ. In His mercy, you can await the Last Day with joy! Our returning Judge has paid the price and has given you His work. He has forgiven, renewed, and baptized you into Himself, *that [you] may be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. Just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true. Amen.*