



Martin Luther

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, deliver us from evil; so that we may also hear the glad and welcome words: Come, ye blessed, into the kingdom of my Father. This is the verdict we await; for this reason we are Christians, and just for the sake of this hope we are so severely oppressed, first by Satan and by our own flesh, which would not have us believe this and rejoice over it; then by the tyranny and enmity of the world. For we must constantly see and hear the maliciousness which Satan and the world practice against the Gospel. There is so much misery upon earth that we ought to be tired of this life and cry aloud: Come, dear Lord, and deliver us."

~Sermon on Matthew 25:31-46

This Bible Study is brought to you by Issues, Etc. Listen on demand at www.issuesetc.org.

Issues, Etc.



Christ-Centered Cross-Focused Talk Radio
www.issuesetc.org

Around the Word Bible Study

Trinity, 2015

Parables: "On Faith & Good Works" Matthew 25:31-46

Introduction: In our present day culture which values what it perceives as "inclusiveness" above all else, a true understanding of this parable will be the epitome of Paul's warning that, "the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God," (1 Cor 1:18). It is tempting to make this parable to be all about good works (many commentaries, studies, and sermons on it have done just that). Indeed the parable is about good works, but when the parable is properly kept in the context of the whole Gospel message, it is clear that it is about good works as fruits of faith. Even the most fervent atheists do works which benefit others. The real distinction between those who are perishing and those who are saved is faith.

Opening: Psalm 50

¹The Mighty One, God the LORD,
speaks and summons the earth*
from the rising of the sun to its setting.
²**Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.**
³Our God comes; he does not keep silence;*
before him is a devouring fire,
around him a mighty tempest.
⁴**He calls to the heavens above*
and to the earth, that he may judge his people:**
⁵"Gather to me my faithful ones,*
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!"
⁶**The heavens declare his righteousness,*
for God himself is judge!**
⁷"Hear, O my people, and I will speak;
O Israel, I will testify against you.*
I am God, your God.
⁸**Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you;*
your burnt offerings are continually before me.**
⁹I will not accept a bull from your house*
or goats from your folds.
¹⁰**For every beast of the forest is mine,*
the cattle on a thousand hills.**
¹¹I know all the birds of the hills,*
and all that moves in the field is mine.
¹²**"If I were hungry, I would not tell you,*
for the world and its fullness are mine.**
¹³Do I eat the flesh of bulls*
or drink the blood of goats?
¹⁴**Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,*
and perform your vows to the Most High,**
¹⁵and call upon me in the day of trouble;*
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."
¹⁶**But to the wicked God says:***
**"What right have you to recite my statutes
or take my covenant on your lips?"**

¹⁷For you hate discipline,*
and you cast my words behind you.
¹⁸**If you see a thief, you are pleased with him,*
and you keep company with adulterers.**
¹⁹"You give your mouth free rein for evil,*
and your tongue frames deceit.
²⁰**You sit and speak against your brother;*
you slander your own mother's son.**
²¹These things you have done, and I have been silent;
you thought that I was one like yourself.*
But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you.
²²**Mark this, then, you who forget God,*
lest I tear you apart, and there be none to deliver!**
²³The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me;*
to one who orders his way rightly
I will show the salvation of God!"
**Glory be to the Father and to the Son*
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,*
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Read Matthew 25:31-46

v.31-33: "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."
Read Matthew 24:4-14, 23-31, and 36-51 (esp. v. 30-31). How are Jesus' words concerning the end times brought to completion in this parable?

What is meant by “all the nations?” (cf. Rev 7:9)

v.34–36: “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.’”

How do Paul’s words in Romans 8:28–30 give us a picture of what it means that the kingdom the sheep inherit was prepared for them from the foundation of the world?

On what basis do the sheep inherit the kingdom prepared for them? Is it on account of their works? (cf. Mt. 3:2, 4:17, 18:1–4; Jn. 3:3–5)

Note that not a single sin is mentioned or attributed to the sheep but only their good works are highlighted. How can this be so? (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14–21, Tit. 3:3–7) According to what are they judged?

v. 37–40: “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, you did it to me.’”

Why do the sheep not recognize the good works that the Son of Man/King attributes to them? Read Ephesians 1:1–14 (esp. v. 13–14). On what might the sheep be focusing that would prevent them from focusing on their good works?

What does Ephesians 2:1–10 teach us about the relationship of faith and good works? Can a dead person (Eph. 2:1) do good works?

Who are “these my brothers?” (cf. Jn. 8:31, Jn. 15:9–17) How does this help us to understand the purpose of good works? (If good works are things done to Christ’s brothers, who are the intended beneficiaries of good works?)

Bible Study

Parables

Matthew 25:31–46

v.41–46: “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.”

Why are the goats’ sins held against them when the sheep’s sins are not? Read 2 Corinthians 5:10 and then reconsider 2 Cor. 5:14–21 and consider what the difference is between the sheep and the goats.

Read Psalm 119:11–13, and, if possible,

the 3rd Commandment and meaning from Luther’s *Small Catechism*. Given who are Christ’s brothers (from the question in the section above), to what do the goats truly fail to adhere?

Read James 2:14–26. What do the goats fail to produce? What does this failure reveal to be ultimately lacking in them and how does this relate to their failure referenced in the previous question?

Read Ezekiel 34:7–24 (esp. v. 18–19). While Ezekiel speaks of two different types of sheep, how does that distinction support and reflect the parable’s distinction between the sheep and the goats?

Closing: The Day is Surely Drawing Near (LSB, 508)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR Rev. Jeffrey Ries (lcmspastor896@gmail.com) is pastor of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tacoma, WA.

