

First Baptist Church Smiths Falls

November 25, 2018

Thine Is The Kingdom, The Power And The Glory. Forever And Ever. Amen

Message: "Christ The King - The Gift of Gifts"

Introduction:

- I can still remember, to this day, the joyous anticipation of Christmas morning as a child. Looking at the parcels underneath the sparkling Christmas tree, and realizing that in a little while I would have the thrill of opening and playing with their contents. This was enough to make me feel giddy. Giddy, for those of you that are younger, is an old-fashioned word for feeling overly joyed. And, I have to admit, that every now and then I was somewhat disappointed – mom and dad would occasionally wrap up socks or pyjamas and even occasionally even a package of underwear when I was a child. There’s still a great joy in knowing that you’re going to have some fresh gotchies on Christmas Day, but no one ever imagines opening up a pair of underwear and getting all excited. And yet I do remember some great presents: hot wheels with an amazing race track; binoculars that sparked my imagination and let me see for miles away; and board games, such as “Monopoly,” “Scrabble,” and an electronic hand-held football game.
- We all like receiving gifts of love thoughtfully given to us. The Bible tells us that there’s one gift, in particular, that is available to everyone.

Scripture Readings: Matthew 25:31-46

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? 38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39 And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' 40 And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' 41 Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; 42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' 44 Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' 45 Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Prayer of Illumination: Congregational Prayer: “Our Father”

Our Father, Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom Come. Thy Will Be Done, On Earth As It Is In Heaven. Give Us This Day, Our Daily Bread, And Forgive Us Our Trespasses, As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us. And Lead Us Not Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil. For

It is a gift which is the greatest gift of all. It does not come in a box. It does not come wrapped up in some fancy ribbon. It does not have some complicated instructions written by someone with a rudimentary understanding of the English language. The gift of the Bible, the gift from God is the gift of life itself that is available in Christ Jesus alone.

- Today we want to talk about that gift from God, and use this parable to understand what a magnificent present it is.

Part one: Matthew 25 – The Parable - Matthew 25:31-46

- You might be surprised that this parable from Matthew 25 is about a gift. Most preach on this parable about being good to others. And yet most scholars would agree that this parable is not really a parable. Some would add to that it's not even an allegory – both of these meaning that there are images to understand, digest, and attach meanings. And while there are elements of an allegory and elements of a parable in this passage from Matthew 25, this really is simply a dramatic scene that foretells the future. This is a direct description of the last judgment of God's people as we will one day stand before God the Creator.
- Now, before we start to drift off into imagination-land here in Church, or get all upset about the word judgment, we need to understand one

simple principle: there will be a judgment. How many of you have been out driving and changed your habits because you believe you see a police car ahead of you? How many of you have suddenly become aware that you are in the presence of someone who is a spiritual leader, or a politician or someone else that is considered to be above the rest of us, only to have our behaviour change? We all have to understand that when it comes to judgment, judgment happens all the time. We assess quickly things in our lives – like the menu in front of us, or the warmth in the room, or do I really want to sit on this side of the living room to watch TV, or am I driving fast enough, or to slow. These are judgements. And while these things have to do with us, the truth is, that we are often faster to judge others around us than we are at judging ourselves.

- And yet none of us wants to consider judgment, which is funny because included in judgment is not just a divvying out of punishment for errors. True judgment is an accurate account of all things including the good for which we shall be rewarded.
- I remember going to write exams and praying, halfheartedly, “Lord bless me as I write this exam, but Lord, if you gonna come back soon,

please return before I write this exam and not just after.” I would pray that even though I never wrote an exam that I failed, and was often delighted to see that I was rewarded for the amount of work that I’d done in studying and in understanding the work before me, but I still had that trepidation about the judgment of being under an exam.

- Let’s take a look again at Matthew 25. The last half of this parable, starting at verse 41, is the negative. Going back to verse 32, we see that the goats have been separated, in verse 33 says the goats are on the left of the king on the throne. Looking back at verse 41, we see that those on his left, the goats, those are about to be given a negative judgment, are told that, because they did not care for those around them [versus 42 and 43], that they would be made to leave the presence of the king. They would be cursed, and they’re going to be sent to the “...*eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels* (v. 41).” This is a place where, as verse 46 says, there will be eternal punishment.
- Preachers don’t preach on stuff like this that much any longer. Churches don’t often speak about punishment, condemnation, separation, or even being cursed. We have tried to whitewash the gospel to make it easier to hear, but we must retain the truth that this building was erected as a

lighthouse for those lost in the dark, as a lifeboat for those on life's sinking ship, as a life preserver for those who are drowning in their own sins.

- Please hear this a truth: there is judgment. There is a hell. There is a place of eternal punishment. There is a place of separation from God. There is a place that has been set up (v. 41) for the devil and his fallen angels, otherwise known as demons. And frankly, I don’t want to think about it. Frankly, I do want to have any lingering thoughts about the horrors of such a place. Frankly, such a judgment to such a place scares me deeply.
- And while we may dwell on that part of this parable from Matthew 25, the joyous truth is way more evident: this parable is **not** about those that end up in condemnation. This parable is not about those who wind up being lost for eternity. This parable is not even about eternal judgment.
- This parable is about life. This parable is about a gift. This parable is about the God of grace, love, hope, peace, joy, and eternal life.

Part two: Angels

- It is of interest to note that this parable talks about Satan and his fallen angels (v. 41). Somewhere between the nothingness of Genesis chapter

1 verse one, and the creation of humanity in Genesis 1:27, another story unfolds. The story of angels is scattered throughout the Bible. Created before us, created, as it says in Psalm 8:5, higher than us as humanity, angels, like humanity, rebelled against God, (see Revelation 12:3-9), lead by Satan (Isaiah 14:12). According to one fictitious story that I read, the rebellion against God by the Angels could of been the result of us, of humanity. The story was that God asked the Angels to care for us humans because we are weaker and less powerful. But one third of the angels decided they were not going to do such a thing because they expected that we weaker humans should be serving them since they more powerful. A very interesting story, indeed.

- Whatever the exact background, as this parable says in verse 41, the rebelling angels and their offensive leader, Satan, the devil, have a place of torment and damnation set up for them. And, if the story of angels rebelling against God because they didn't want to help out we lesser humans is even partially true, then we have another link to our parable, don't we? For this parable from Matthew 25 is about reaching down, reaching back, reaching around us, and helping those that are in need. This parable is about helping those that are helpless. This parable is

about us, as believers, taking Christ to those in the world that are hurting and needy, and sharing Him with others, as the angels are to be to us.

Part 3: The Gift is The Good News

- This parable from Matthew 25 is about hope.
- God knew that we, as His precious created people, would rebel. God does not want to see any of his precious children go astray. Or, as 2 Peter 3:9 (NIV) says: *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise (that is about His return to the earth for judgement), as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”* God does not want to lose any one of His precious children. God wants to protect every one of us in humanity. The Lord God wants everyone to live an abundant life here on earth, and then to live with Him for eternity. As the song says, “safe in the arms of Jesus.”
- Why? What's so special about Jesus? Why can we be safe in the arms of Jesus? It's because Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, the Lord of all, is a gift. Only Jesus, as part of the Godhead, only Jesus, through whom all creation was done, only Jesus, who came to earth as God made flesh could wipe away the sins of all of humanity.

- We all need to be saved. Matthew 25 tells us that there is a Saviour. Jesus gave up His life as a final atoning sacrifice to pay for the sins of all humanity for all time. Therefore the judgement of Matthew 25 is erased by The One Who is worthy. Jesus has provided The Way for all to avoid condemnation and eternal judgment.
- Let me tell you of the story of a friend that liked to burn his Christmas trees. He would go out in the field in early January and light them on fire. But one year he decided that he would light his Christmas tree in the heat of the summer. After he pried the match he had this brilliant idea that maybe he should have brought out some fire protection so he went back to the farmhouse for shovel. But when he returned he found that there is too much fire to shovel so he went back to the barn for the hose. But when he returned he found out that he had lit the whole field on fire. In the end, our friend burnt down a small subdivision. It became a story of being too little and too late.
- The same would be true of you or I if we tried to save humanity: too little, too late. There is no way that anyone of us are worthy to save all of humanity for all time - or even save ourselves. But God is – thanks be to The Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

- Please understand this: the One that is sitting on the throne in this parable from Matthew 25 is none other than the worthy Christ, the Messiah, it is Jesus. He's the one who died on the cross of Calvary to give us all life, having paid, in full, the debt of your sins and mine.
- While this parable reminds us that we are to be living for Him in this world, caring for those that cannot do what we can for them, this parable is mostly about the gift of the Christ. This parable is about what happens to those that chose to turn to God; those that are known by the Saviour; those that love the One on the throne, know Him, and serve Him with their life. All because they accepted the gift of Jesus.
- How did you do that? How do you accept this gift of Christ? Let me ask you this: How do you accept any gift? You simply reach out and take that which is offered to you. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is exactly what those that were on the right did in this parable from Matthew 25 – they accepted the great gift of the Saviour, and stepped into eternal life.

Conclusion:

- I can still remember giving my heart to Jesus as a small child. I can remember accepting His free gift of Salvation. My life changed wonderfully and deeply for that day, for today, and for ever. You might

be here today for the 1000th visit, or you might be here today for your very first time. Maybe you are watching on TV having never heard of the incredible love of God the Saviour, nor His plan to save you. It might be a surprise to you to know that God is offering to you a gift of salvation, the gift of life, the gift of hope and peace and joy and eternal security. It might be a surprise to you to know that Jesus Christ is the greatest gift not just of Christmas, but the greatest gift ever given.

- And all you have to do, is say yes, and accept the greatest present ever.