Title: “The King Reveals His Kingdom”

Chris Ryan	**Matt. 25:31–46**	**11/22/2026**

Service Readings: Ezek. 34:11–16, 20–24; 1 Cor. 15:20–28; Matt. 25:31–46
When Christ returns to judge the world, our hope rests not in what we have done, but in the kingdom He has prepared for us.

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

To understand today’s Gospel passage we must first expand our view to Jesus’ earlier statements. In Matthew 10 he teaches his disciples that “whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.”

And then, in today’s passage he teaches that when the son of man comes in glory he will separate the sheep from the goats. Jesus will say to those condemned,

> 41 … ‘Depart from me, you cursed, 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 no drink, 43 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.’ 44 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?’ 45 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.’ 46 And these will
> go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

But to the sheep he will say, “Come, you who are blessed and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world… for as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”

What are we to make of this teaching? On the surface, it may seem simple enough – Jesus will judge based on how well we loved our neighbors as ourselves. But that creates tension and even contradiction in our understanding of God’s mercy delivered through the sacrifice of Christ. Is our salvation *really* dependent upon the love that we express to those God places in our daily walk?

Understanding this passage hinges on who Jesus calls his brothers. In these teachings they are those that he has called and sent into the world to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments. Judging will be based on how the world has received them. How have you received the Word and Sacraments? How have you received those who speak in the stead and by the command of our Lord?

Now, before we explore those questions, it is important to take a moment and focus on the preachers. Implied in this teaching is Christ’s expectation that they are his disciples, those he has called. He expects them to be faithful to his teachings, to obey him in all things. He warns about hypocritical teachers, those who “preach but do not practice.” He warns against those who “tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.”

Jesus has called certain people proclaim his word and administer his sacraments, and so it is right for me to first turn inward and reflect on my own actions. Jesus expects those he sends to be faithful to his Word. As I

reflect on my first year in full-time ministry, I recognize how easily I can begin to approach my call as though it were simply a job. I want to see results. I want to see increased attendance and participation. And when those things don't happen, I can question whether I am being faithful. But my call is not to produce results. My call is to faithfully preach God's Word and administer his Sacraments. I need this reminder, too. The work belongs to Christ, and I must continually repent when I begin measuring my ministry by these worldly standards.

And this brings us back to you. Jesus' words are not simply a reminder to those he sends. They also invite us to consider how we receive those he sends. Here again I would caution you to not understand his words superficially. He is not asking how well you take care of me, Pastor Mark, or any other rightly-called pastor. For Christ warns that they may see hunger, poverty, sacrifice, and suffering. His teaching is much deeper. I opened this sermon with an earlier teaching of Jesus. He said that "whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me." This is the key to understanding today's passage.

The question for you this morning is this: how have you received Jesus? How have you responded to the Word preached and the Sacraments given? You see, it is possible to enjoy the benefits of being part of Christ's body while at the same time becoming indifferent to the mission of the Church. You receive his Word through the pastors; you receive the Sacraments. But do you see just a man standing in front of you or do you see Jesus standing with him in your midst? The world may see an ordinary person, some insignificant messenger. They may even regard his work as unimportant. But Jesus says that what you receive from the pastor, and what you reject from the pastor, you receive and reject from Jesus, himself. You should never take lightly the Word that is preached from them. The lesson today is that Jesus will return to judge the nations. He will reveal how they have received or rejected him through his messengers.

And if that is where we leave this teaching, we have every reason to be concerned. Have we always received his Word as we should? Have we always welcomed his correction? Have we always recognized the importance of the people he sends? No. We have not. And if our hope depends on how faithfully we have received him, then who among us could stand on this day of judgement?

But that is not where our hope is found. It is not found in how faithfully we have received Jesus. Our hope is found in how faithfully Jesus has received us. Listen again to his words to the sheep: "Come, you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Take note of the word inherit. An inheritance is received. It is given. It is not earned. It is something that was prepared for you long before any of the sheep had done anything to deserve it. That is the mercy of God in Christ. Before we ever received him, he came for us. Before we ever welcomed him, he welcomed us. He came into this world as a servant. He knew hunger and thirst. He was rejected by his own people. He was mocked, beaten, and nailed to the cross.

And on the cross, Jesus did what we could never do for ourselves. He bore our sins. He took them upon himself as the judgement we deserved. He died and rose again, defeating death, sin, and the devil. And he will be the king that will one day sit on his glorious throne and judge the world.

So when we hear this Gospel, we do not have to stand before the king pointing out our record of service, hoping that we have done enough. We stand before him trusting in what he has done for us. We are blessed by the father, not because we have earned his favor, but because Christ has given himself for us.

And this same Christ continues to come to us through his word, spoken by those he sends. He comes through the waters of Baptism. He comes in his body and blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of our sins. These

are not ordinary gifts, and the people he delivers them through are not carrying an ordinary message. Through these gifts, Christ himself comes to forgive, strengthen, and sustain us.

The king is coming. And when he comes, our confidence will not be in how well we have served him, how successful our ministry has been, or how perfectly we have received his messengers. Our confidence will be in Jesus Christ, the king who gave himself for us, who has claimed us as his own, and who has prepared an inheritance for us.

Come, you who are blessed by the father. That is the promise of our king.

Please pray with me.
Lord Jesus, thank You for receiving us in mercy and giving us the inheritance of eternal life. Forgive us when we take Your Word for granted, and strengthen us to receive Your gifts with thankful hearts. Keep us faithful until You come again in glory.
Amen.