

For The Love Of God – Mt 25:31-46

This is the second week of 3, in our **Local Outreach Conference**

Intended to inform you of God's heart toward the least of these . . .

And encourage you to rise up and be used by God, to rebuild and restore their lives

To that end, we looked at Is 58 last week, and now turn our attention to Mt 25

Where God once again lays out *his* expectations, and *our* responsibility toward those in need; So if you haven't already, let's open our Bibles to Mt 25:31-46 (**Intro**)

- This is part of what is commonly called the Olivet Discourse
B/c according to 24:3 where it starts, Jesus was sitting on the Mt of Olives, speaking privately to his disciples; It was a discourse, a dialogue

And the main topic was his return, his second coming

Focusing on what it will be like for those who follow him, and those who don't

Those who love him, and those who could care less

And after telling them a few parables to that end, he gets very explicit here in v31

Saying – *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.*

Son of Man was a title from Daniel 7, that referred to a mysterious human-divine figure who would be given rule over all the earth

And Jesus used it of himself over 80 times in the gospels, to convey that he *was* in fact that long-expected Messiah, and would indeed judge the people and reign as king

32 Before him will be gathered all the nations [all the people groups; all of them], *and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.*

Now, contrary to the popular Left Behind theology, or dispensationalism . . .

This does not refer to a separate judgment of Gentiles only near the end of the Great

Tribulation, based on how they treated the Jews

There's nothing of the sort in this passage

It's a classic example of forcing the Bible to conform to your theology, instead of forcing your theology to conform to the Bible

Rather, this most likely refers to the Great White Throne judgment at the *end* of the Millennium, found in Rev 20

B/c that's when believers *and* unbelievers, from all time, are gathered for judgment – just like Jesus says here in Mt 25

Before him will be gathered all the nations – sheep and goats alike

33 And he will place the sheep on his right [the place of privilege and safety], *but the goats on the left* [representing unbelievers]. *34 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.*

And then he drops the bombshell

Up to this point, it's been information that's pretty easy to stomach

But now, he gives us the *basis* for his separation and blessing

35 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, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’

37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ 40 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.’

And *that*, is the main point he's trying to get across here; That . . .

Tangible love for the least of these, is love for Jesus

Our acts of compassion for those in need, are done as if for Jesus himself

As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me. You did it to me

It's kind of like looking up a family member or one of your friends while you're away on vacation, and spending some time with them

Or taking their son or daughter who's in college, out to dinner as you pass through on a business trip

Though you said nothing to your friends back home, and spent no time with *them* – they feel incredibly loved, don't they? Why?

B/c you did something nice for someone *they* love; Someone who's close to their heart

And the same is true when you meet the needs of someone *Jesus* loves; Someone who's close to *his* heart; Someone who's *precious* in his sight

Though he's a “world away,” *he* feels loved

- Becky and I experienced this first-hand recently, when some friends of a family here in our church . . .

Showed up at our *daughter's* church one morning in OH, where she's a college student

And though we don't know them, and they don't know us . . .

They heard about Jessica from the family *here*, and that she was driving an hour each way, to be a part of that church

So they found her after the service one Sunday, told her they were inspired by her dedication, gave her \$20 bucks for gas, and extended an open invitation to their house
Offering to be her home away from home while she was in college

You can imagine how that made us feel – we started crying; We felt *so* loved; *We* did
Why? B/c they loved our daughter – our own flesh

A person's tangible love for someone near to your heart, is tangible love for you

It's one and the same

And Jesus is no different

Tangible love for those near and dear to his heart, including those who are down and out – is love for him; So much so, that he says . . .

As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me. You loved *me*

- *41 “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* [hell].

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 [did not help you; did
not meet your needs; did not love on 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. ’ [Which means if you don’t love *them*, you don’t love *him*]

46 And these [referring to those on his left] will go away into eternal punishment, but the
righteous into eternal life.”

Now, if you were to take this text out of context, if you were to separate it from the rest of
Scripture, you might come to the erroneous conclusion . . .
That your eternity is based on your works – your compassion toward others

But we know that’s not the case, b/c of verses like **Eph 2:8-9**
Where the Apostle Paul says that it’s *by grace* [by God’s unmerited favor] *you have
been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a
result of works*
Compassion or otherwise, salvation is *not* a result of works

And **Gal 2:16** says – *we know that a person is not justified* [saved; declared righteous] *by
works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ*
And **Hab 2:4** says – *the righteous shall live by his faith* [his faith in the one true God]
So our eternity is not based on our *works*, but on God’s grace to save us through faith
Faith in Jesus; Faith in *his* work *****

But his teaching here in Mt 25 remains
Implying, when you combine it with the Scriptures just cited, that . . .

Real love for the Lord, shows

That’s the implication when you put it all together – it shows
And if it doesn’t, it’s not there; It’s not real love; It’s not genuine
No matter how much you say so; No matter how committed to Jesus you are
No matter how much you *feel* it – if your love doesn’t show, it’s not real

- Now, don’t get me wrong – feelings are certainly a *part* of loving Jesus
Otherwise things like adoration, and admiration, and affection, and closeness to him are
bogus; they’re fake
Which we know isn’t true, both from Scripture *and* our own experience
Feelings *are* a part of loving Jesus

As is commitment; A commitment to follow him as Lord of your life
A promise to live his way as you hear me say so often
That too, is a part of loving him

But that’s not all of it, and it’s all for naught if it doesn’t *show* according to this passage
If it’s not expressed in a tangible way toward those in need
Not just to those who are of the household of faith, but to those who *aren’t*

Not just to those who look like us, but to those who *don’t*
Not just to those who live like us, but those who *can’t*
Not just to those who think like us, but those who *won’t*

Real love for the Lord, shows toward those who aren’t, don’t, can’t, and won’t
Otherwise God gets no glory, and people get no help

It would be like having *feelings* for your wife, but never expressing them
Saying you’re committed, but never doing anything about it
Is it real? Is your love real in that case?
Probably not; And it’s definitely not God-honoring
And the same is true of your love for *him*, if it never shows in those he loves

Real love for the Lord shows; Third . . .

The consequences of oversight, are grave

Meaning eternal punishment in the throes of hell; Look at v46 again
The unrighteous, those who fail to love the Lord by loving the least of these, *will go
away into eternal punishment*; Eternal punishment
Where according to v30, the end of the previous parable – there will be darkness,
weeping, and gnashing of teeth
Meaning intense anger, hatred, frustration, and feelings of futility
Not to mention the presence of pain and torment

Do nothing for the Lord, do nothing for those he loves – and the consequences are grave
Overlook those around you – those in need, those in trouble, those *suffering* . . .
And *you* will too; You too will suffer; For all eternity

- Which means that *turning a blind eye* to their plight is not good
“I have enough issues to deal with, I’m not taking on theirs; They’re not my problem”
Not good; Intentionally ignoring them is not good
Adopting a “who cares” attitude is not good

Neither is *complacency* – you know, being *willing* to help, but not really doing anything
about it; which I think is where most of us fall
We sit back and wait for them to come to us often times, don’t we?
Maybe even *hoping* that an opportunity will come our way

Which might turn out okay if indeed that happens – if something does pop up on your
radar screen . . .
But what if it doesn’t? What if you never run across the people or situations that need
your help? Or the help that you can offer?
What then? Does that constitute love for the least of these like Jesus talks about it?
I don’t think so; Which means complacency is not worth the risk

And I’m pretty sure that *busyness* is no excuse either
“Ya God, I had a lot on my plate, you know – TV, sports, work, travel, church; there
just wasn’t much left”

What do you think he’s going to say to that? “That’s okay? I found somebody else? No
worries?” I don’t think so

I don't think busyness is going to cut it as an excuse for not loving those that Jesus loves
And the consequences are grave; The consequences of oversight are grave

So for the love of God, literally; And the sake of your own soul, not to mention theirs . . .

So get involved in the lives of the least of these

Involved, b/c you can't feed the hungry, house the homeless, clothe the poor, visit the sick, or minister to the imprisoned from a *distance*

You can't help the underprivileged, or the fatherless, or the widow, or the stranger from *afar* – love by extension is akin to no love at all

You can't rebuild and restore that which you don't know

You *have* to get *involved* in their lives

And you may have to change yours to do so

Including your schedule, or priorities, or activities, or all the above

There's only so much time in a day and week, and if you wait for something that fits, you may never get involved at all

- To help you with all that, we've put together a simple **insert** in your bulletin, that categorizes the different areas of ministry . . .
And lists our various partners who serve in those areas

Like Christian Care and King's Harvest in **Ministry to the Hungry**

With whom you can prepare meals, serve meals, or clean up meals – 5x a week if you want

Or how about Safe Families, under **Ministry to the Fatherless**

Where you can open your home to at-risk kids on a temporary basis

Or spend some time tutoring those from underprivileged homes

And then there's World Relief under **Ministry to the Stranger**

Where you can help recent immigrants from all over the world, get established in their new life here in the US

7 biblical categories (**insert**), and twice the number of partners, so that you can get involved in the lives of the least of these

- And you should start by praying (**Pray to God**)
Ask God to open your eyes, and show you where he would have you serve

And then **Make the Call**

Pick up the phone, or send an email – and ask about the various ministry opportunities

Talk to them; Explore the possibilities; Meet with them; See what's needed

And then follow through – **Get Involved**

Actually do something; But don't waltz in like you're the solution to all their problems

Just serve them and love them, like you're serving and loving Jesus himself

And as you do – **Invite Others**

Invite someone to go with you, and reproduce yourself from the get-go *****

Whatever you do – for the love of God, get involved in the lives of the least of these
B/c tangible love for them, is genuine love for him

Pray – Enlarge our hearts with more love for you

Increase our gratitude for the blessings we enjoy

And stir our hearts to share them, to share our lives, with those less fortunate

Open our eyes to their plight, and give us the faith to trust what you say