

Matthew 25:31-46

Sermon manuscript on next page

Following the sermon is the photograph for reflection
and comments related to the ecclesial calendar.

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. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴Then 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; ³⁵for 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, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ ³⁷Then 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? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ ⁴⁰And 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.’ ⁴¹Then 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; ⁴²for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I 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.’ ⁴⁴Then 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?’ ⁴⁵Then 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.’ ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Text Matthew 25:31-36; Ephesians 1:15-23;
 Theme Keep in Touch
 Subject 3rd Parable of the Matthew 25 trilogy
 Occasion Reign of Christ – November 22, 2020 – New Song ECUSA via ZOOM

Recently I heard a pastor suggest the Facebook livestreams, YouTube services and many ZOOM services aren't working for worshipping communities

He suggested something more like a fireside chat

Lesley and I warm to the idea and sense that's often how we now worship together here

There is some ecclesial calendar stuff I'd like to talk about, but we can do that later

In the spirit of a fireside chat Grace to you and peace

Today and the previous 2 weeks Matthew 25 is the Gospel

This chapter is a trilogy of consummation parables:

Chris helped us with the **Parable of the Ten Maidens**

Lori wondered with us about a **Parable of 3 Laborers** given responsibilities

We just heard the parable labeled **The Judgment of the Nations**

In Matthew's telling of the Jesus story, these 3 parables are a unit and seem to tell the culminating message of Jesus' teachings and healings.

These parables bring to mind Garrison Keillor's closing of The Writer's Almanac:

“Be well; Do good work; Keep in touch”

Be well you 10 bridesmaids

The bridegroom is coming so *be sure you're ready*

Have enough oil in your lamps – *it may be a while*

For all of Matthew's readers, including us, have enough gas in your tank

BE PREPARED as **Chris** taught us 2 – it's a long journey, a long wait

Do good work you 3 farm hands while the owner is away

You've got plenty of work to do

It's important work and valuable work

For all of Matthew's readers, including us, we've been given the good news of Jesus

It's GREAT NEWS; it needs to be TENDED, LIVED & SHARED as **Lori** reminded us

Keep in touch with everybody – without having to be told

The goodness happening for you is necessary for everybody –

food, water, welcome, warmth, kindness, freedom

For all of Matthew's readers, including us, how are others doing?

open ourselves to hear & LISTEN, to see & RECOGNIZE

This is the transcendent life – meeting others' needs beyond your own

There's angry stuff at the end each of these 3 parables

So *inconsistent* with anything we've heard in Matthew's telling about Jesus

Here are the endings to these 3 parables

- **'Truly I tell you** (bridesmaids who ran out of oil); **I do not know you.'** (v 12)
- **As for this worthless slave** (who buried the talent), **throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'** (v 29-30)
- **... just 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, ...**" (v 45-46)

These endings don't sound like Jesus' teaching

and I submit, THEY ARE *NOT* JESUS' TEACHINGS

Remembering Jesus' campaign platform, *the Beatitudes* (5:3-12) where ones named to be **Blessed** did not have standing in the Empire,

the harsh judgement conclusions of these parables is off.

There is lots of "works righteousness" in the Bible, but *it didn't fall from Jesus' lips*

Three or more decades prior to the writing of Matthew, Paul had written an encyclical from which we heard this morning

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you (Eph 1:17-18)

Near the end of the next paragraph Paul wrote,

For by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is a gift of God – not the result of works (2:8-9a)

The condemnations in the parables is the voice of the Roman Empire AND EVERY EMPIRE

- Be prepared *or be denied*
- Be obedient *or go to hell*
- Recognize me *or be punished forever*

For first readers, they knew this is how the Roman Empire works

To Matthew's readers this may have seemed a joke

NO WAY WOULD JESUS TEACH THIS

The point of these condemnations is the need of rescue: **A SAVIOR**

Matthew's theme is exactly that

There in the voice of an angel speaking to Joseph (1:21b)

you are to name him Jesus, for he will SAVE his people from their sins

REMEMBER, Matthew is a writer with a story, not a reporter with a scoop.

Matthew's culminating trilogy for us is Jesus' *Last Lecture*

"Be well; Do good work; Keep in touch"

Rather than wondering or naming when we've been providing for others, who are they?

The derecho assaulted Linn County and revealed many people: very vulnerable people

The immigrant, non-English speaking, poor

People who live with their heads down, out of sight

Wanting no trouble for fear of the unknown

- When the roofs were blown off the apartment buildings
- When their food was spoiled
- When they had no access to water
- When they knew no one to ask for help
- When all their belongings were blown away
- When they got sick due to exposure and COVID

Derecho was the sound of a mighty wind revealing Jesus

Jesus crying out from necessity:

hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, prisoner

Once the shock of derecho passed, people seemed to recognize Jesus

There amid the devastation were 1000s of helpless ones

First responders arrived

Then came the citizens – the neighbors

An acquaintance in Cedar Rapids told me, when he showed up with a church group to help, he was aware that *“they don't know me, but I know them – they look like Jesus.”*

The derecho of August 10 shows what a mighty wind can do:

Devastation and revelation

See what the wind did; see the people the wind revealed

The derecho brought us in touch with many people – helpers and desperate ones

The helpers are here and were before the derecho

The desperate ones are here and were before the derecho

This third parable of Matthew's trilogy reminds us firmly: keep in touch

Look around; walk a mile in someone else's shoes; imagine the life

Get in touch; stay in touch

These good works won't save us

We do good works because we are saved

We gather in Jesus' name, let's leave with the Holy Breath in us

“Be well; Do good work; Keep in touch”

The Art



In early 2013, Canadian sculptor Timothy Schmalz unveiled “Homeless Jesus,” a bronze sculpture depicting Jesus as a homeless person, sleeping on a park bench. Schmalz installed the original sculpture at Regis College, University of Toronto, and since then, casts have been installed worldwide. The sculpture is designed in such a way that Jesus is huddled beneath a blanket, his face and hands obscured. Only the crucifixion wounds on his feet reveal his identity.

A devout Catholic, Schmalz describes the sculpture as a “visual translation” of our Gospel reading for this week, in which Jesus identifies himself with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner, and then tells his followers: “Whatever you did to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

Not surprisingly, reactions to the statue vary. Some people find it offensive. Others adore it. Pope Francis has blessed it. People sit and pray beside it. In one city, a woman called the police within minutes of the sculpture’s installation, assuming that the figure beneath the blanket was a real homeless person.