

The title for today's message is: **Saved By The Grace of God**

Jesus said: **He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left**

Grace and peace, to you from God our Father and our Lord, Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Let us pray: Dear Heavenly Father, we give you thanks that through your Son, Jesus Christ, you have revealed your will for our lives, and have redeemed us from sin and death. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, open our hearts and minds to your Word and the Sacraments, that we might come to gain a deeper appreciation for all that our Lord has done for us, and come to embrace him as our redeemer. This we ask in his holy name. Amen.

This morning, we celebrate the last Sunday of the church year, a Sunday in which we honor Jesus Christ as King.

It is a day to remember that through the power of the Holy Spirit, God calls us to acknowledge that only Jesus, is worthy to be our Lord.

Today's entire passage talks about the judgment that will take place when Christ returns.

A time when He will separate those found worthy to inherit the Kingdom, and those who will go into eternal punishment in hell.

Its not a very comfortable passage to hear, especially considering the reason given for the separation: He will say to the blessed ones, Come and inherit the Kingdom.

***“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, 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.***

Now, those found to be righteous in the judgment are surprised and puzzled: They asked Jesus; “When did we do this to you, Lord?”

And Jesus will answer: When you did it to the least of my followers, you did it to me. Then comes the bad news:

Those who did not share food and clothing with the needy, did not welcome strangers, did not care for the sick, and visited no one in prison, are accused and sent to hell.

Now, Christ’s teachings on the subject of his future judging of the world first occurs in Matthew chapter 7.

Where Jesus said: ***“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.***

Here the judgement of condemnation seems to fall upon those who use Jesus’ name, but didn’t know and understand Jesus at all.

The truth is, simply engaging in acts of ministry is not necessarily what Jesus wants. Jesus wants us to know him in a intimate way.

So that our actions, and the way that we live our lives, naturally flow from our relationship with him.

And the interesting thing about our lesson for this morning, is the fact that those who did what Jesus would have expected.

Did so without trying to earn our Lord's good favor. They didn't even realize that they were acting the way that Jesus desired.

Look, from knowing Jesus, their life had been changed in such a way that they just naturally responded to care for those in need.

Clearly my friends, it is not our deeds that make us righteous, but our intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

And I believe that this is where these lessons of Jesus about the final judgment ask us to focus our attention.

It's not so important to know a lot of facts about Jesus, as it is to know and believe in Jesus.

I think Luther put it well when he said: "I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him.

But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and kept me in true faith.

What a marvelous insight, here, Luther is insisting that even our belief in Christ is not something that we can take credit in.

For if it wouldn't be for the love of God working through the church, and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

We wouldn't even have the opportunity to have heard of Jesus Christ, let alone come into relationship with him.

But thanks be to God that he has given us the gift of his Spirit, which has inspired his church to proclaim his Word, and celebrate the Sacraments.

So that we might all come to know Jesus, and allow him to become, not only a part of our lives.

But through our intimate relationship with him, the direction by which we live our lives.

Now there's a story I read on the internet which took place during the French revolution.

Its about a mother of two children who wandered through the woods for three days, trying to survive on roots and leaves.

On the third day, she heard some soldiers approaching and quickly hid herself and the children behind some bushes.

One of the soldiers prodded the bushes with his bayonet, to see if anyone was hiding.

When he saw the starving woman and her two children, he immediately gave them a loaf of brown bread.

The mother took it eagerly, broke it into two pieces and gave one piece to each of her children. "Is she not hungry," said the soldier's comrade.

"No," he said, "Its because she is a mother and loves her children more than her self."

Well, on the night in which he was betrayed, Jesus took a loaf of bread, broke it and shared it with us all.

And then he gave up his all on the cross, wearing a crown of thorns, and was mocked as being the King of the Jews.

Well, today, we celebrate that he is the King, not only of the Jews, but of the world.

And that bread which he broke and shared with his disciples, that night before his death, and the words he spoke.

Words recorded in the pages of the Scriptures, continue to feed us, and nourish us, that we might come to truly know Jesus, and his redeeming grace.

May God's Spirit continue to work within the church and within our congregation.

That we might grow in our relationship with God and his Son, that we might live as our Lord's disciples, and be surprised to be counted among the elect.

Look we cannot be judged righteous by our own effort. If we could we wouldn't need a Savior!

But Jesus Christ is our Savior, who died for all our sins, not just some of our sins, leaving us hanging for the rest.

And to think, He paid the full penalty for our sins, not just a down payment, so that we would be responsible for the balance.

No! Jesus died for all our sins once and for all, past, present, even sins we will commit in the future.

Now the question is, where is our trust in regards to the sacrifice of Jesus? Do we trust Him completely with our salvation?

Do we unconditionally place our eternity in His hands? Do we fully believe in His promises?

Or do we trust in our good deeds hoping they will outweigh our bad ones? Do we hope to get to heaven because we think we haven't been as bad as some of those other people?

Now, there is nothing wrong with trying to live a good life and do good things for others

But not to collect brownie points for it thinking because of them we deserve to go to heaven.

What's wrong with trying to earn our own salvation? Well first of all, it doesn't work.

And secondly, it is disrespectful to God because it takes away from the value of Christ's sacrifice. My friends the work of salvation is done! Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ!

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.