

## HOMILY FOR ADVENT IV - 2022 - Judgement

Sunday by Sunday as we recite the Nicene Creed we say of our Lord Jesus Christ that... *“He will come again in glory to judge both the living and the dead and His kingdom will have no end.”*

This is a direct reference to what is usually called “The Last Judgement.” Just as Hell, the certain destination of those who reject God is frequently mentioned by our Lord and, as I said a fortnight ago more frequently than heaven, we will find if we begin with the words of Jesus Christ in Scripture that He has plenty to say about what is called “The Last Judgement.”

An excellent exercise to undertake at home is to read what our Lord says in St Matthew’s gospel Chapter 25, for the whole lot of it (all 46 verses) refers to the Last Judgement.

Very briefly indeed the Chapter falls into 3 parts.

1. verses 1-12. The parable of the 10 bridesmaids reminds us to always be prepared for the Last Judgement, like the 5 prudent bridesmaids. Saving faith – the kind that produces fruit – will persevere to the end and there is nothing to fear. On the other hand, a Faith that isn’t genuine – mere intellectual assent without life change – will not persevere. It’s only Jesus who can tell the difference – we can’t. He alone is the judge of that.

We must persevere in virtue and holiness because – we don’t know the day or the hour – we must always be prepared for the long haul.

2. Verses 13-30. The parable of the Talents. This story expands and clarifies the point of doing what we’re supposed to do until Christ returns. We are expected to invest everything that God has given us – spiritual gifts, natural talents, developed abilities and education, skills, life experiences, money, and time – invest it all in building God’s Kingdom here on earth. If we do that – **regardless of what we are given in this life** - we will enter into the joy of the master. If we don’t – condemnation/damnation is sure to follow.

A clear conclusion from this parable can be drawn. It is this: Genuine faith will

drive us to action. Failure to act will result in being *'thrown into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

3. Verses 31-46. The Judgement of the Nations or the parable of the sheep and the goats. This story makes it quite clear that when Christ returns in glory He will judge all the nations – that is, absolutely everyone. The righteous – the sheep – on Christ's right, will go to heaven. They fed, gave water, welcomed, cared for, and visited Jesus Christ when He was in need, a stranger, sick, or in prison. They cared for others!

The opposite is true for the unrighteous – the goats – those on the left will go to eternal punishment (damnation) – eternal fire prepared for the devil and demons all because they didn't care for others.

These works – either done, or neglected, will give a clear indication as to whether a heart has been transformed by saving faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour or not. Jesus is quite clear about this – real faith does these things, and that should be sobering for us. Real faith transforms us. Real faith changes who we are and how we see and treat all other people. This is what St James means in his epistle when he says so clearly to us that... *"faith without works is dead."*

Dear People, the Last Judgement is not some theological concept it's a reality that awaits all of us. We know not when or how but it's an absolute certainty. In order to be prepared for it, no matter how it eventuates... be faithful and be a true servant of Jesus Christ. Some well known words of St Paul come to my mind... *"While we have time let us do good unto all...especially those who are of the household of the faith."* One thing that is certain is that we only have time while we are alive and that is right now! Do not put off making a serious effort with God's help and God's grace to live a credibly faithful life.

Speculation about when will the last day, the Day of Judgement come? What will it be like? What will happen to me when I die? ...what will Heaven be like?...what will Hell be like?...all of that is quite pointless for the simple reason that these realities are presently beyond the scope of our understanding. Our minds cannot conceive them in any sense except by the use of earthly images like sheep and goats,

wedding banquets, fire and brimstone and the like.

However, do not make the mistake of thinking for one single moment that Judgement, Heaven and Hell are any less real than life and death.

That is what non-believers do. They dismiss these concepts, precisely because they dismiss God Himself, out of human conceit and pride...that is, because of the fallen nature of humanity.

These days its very fashionable for the godless to put their faith in the so-called Big Bang theory. X number of billions of years ago everything that there is, including matter and time as we know it, came into being by some amazing event that was totally accidental. It all happened without any cause in the space of a nano-second. The totally random thing that resulted that has no purpose and no goal, which includes you and me, and which is called called the universe (or are there billions of parallel universes?) has been hurtling on to who knows where ever since.

Its an absolute nonsense and if ever there is a verse in the Psalms that is completely and utterly true it is Psalm 14 Verse 1 *“The fool has said in his heart..*

**“There is no God.”**

The

ultimate in arrogance and the ultimate in self deception is to imagine and to posit that all that there is and ever has been is the result of a random chance event. We believe (with much better reason and logic to support our belief, I might add) that it is God who is the eternal creator of all that there is. We believe that Jesus Christ, His incarnate Son, is the full and final revelation of the nature of God which is justice, mercy, love and forgiveness. Christian people although keenly aware of our human limitations, our fallen nature as we call it, we place all our hope in Jesus and trust in the mighty power of His cross, His death and His Glorious resurrection.

And so, by faith every believer should learn to fear Hell, that eternal separation from God because it does await those who consciously reject God in this life and those who consciously live destructive, immoral and self-centred lives.

However by faith, every believer can face death with hope.

Because it is only faith, on the day of judgement, whenever and however that is to be ...that enables us to look to Jesus our Saviour with confidence, provided we are

repentant and that we live lives that are worthy of His calling to holiness of life.

Above all, by faith in Our Lord's great triumph over sin and death through His Suffering, Death and Resurrection we can all hope, indeed, we have every reason to hope, for eternal life with God in a state of joy and bliss that is unimaginable.

As another Advent now draws to a close.. may the God of peace Himself, sanctify us completely and may the whole essence of our being – spirit, soul and body – be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.