

Second Sunday of End Time – Last Judgment
November 10, 2013
Matthew 25:31-46
Jesus Will Come in Glory for Final Judgment
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Fellow-Redeemed,

We need to file away these pictures of Judgment Day under “E” for erroneous- Jesus as a Roman Emperor giving a thumbs up or thumbs down on the basis of how well he thought I fought the fight of faith. Jesus returning either before or after a lengthy age of perfection and glory here on earth to restore the Davidic kingdom.

The Scriptures give clear and sufficient testimony to Jesus the Judge’s one time second coming. Jesus takes the person, body and soul, into the kingdom of heaven. Or, Jesus sends the person, body and soul, into the hell he prepared for the fallen angels.

The back wall of the chancel at St. Andrew’s in Chicago is a giant mural of the blue sky filled with white clouds. Hanging in the front of it is a large statue of Jesus with outstretched arms. This depicts the angel’s words to Christ’s Church, *“This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”* [Acts 1:11]

Jesus Will Come in Glory for Final Judgment. The only basis for this judgment is faith in Jesus. This faith will have evidenced itself in love.

When the Son of God became the Son of Man, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, not everyone recognized him. Many still do not worship him. The same Son of God and Son of Man stands at the threshold between heaven and earth prepared to come again; visibly glorious this time. The next time he appears every one will worship him either through tears of joy or tears of terror.

What separates those two groups is faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus will “come to judge the living and the dead” we confess. We will be there and who would not want to be? With saving trust in all Jesus did for me under the law and on the cross, I eagerly anticipate my Savior’s long overdue, long overdue in human thinking, return to redeem not only my soul but also my body. We pray in our liturgy “that the eyes which have seen the coming of your Son may long for his coming again.”

The coming of Jesus on the last day is for the final judgment. God’s judgment in Christ already has taken place. Jesus’ bodily resurrection from death declared the whole world not guilty of sin and no longer under the penalty of death. God’s subjective judgment already has taken place. The Holy Spirit connected us to Christ’s death and burial through Holy Baptism so that with Christ we live a new life. Jesus told Nicodemus, “Whoever believes in me has eternal life.”

Do not think of the final judgment as the time God’s makes his decision about what to do with you. In Christ and by faith he already has decided. The final judgment is harvest time. It is the time for separating people “as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” Final judgment is the public revelation of the faith now hidden in the hearts of believers.

Such hidden faith does now evidence itself in love. The Savior-Judge declares that when faith works in love for my neighbor, it is working in love for him. “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you visited me.”

Believers will receive these words of glorious praise from our Savior. It is his love that produced such fruits of charity. He is the Vine. We are the branches. He produces fruit through us. At the same time, Jesus’ verdict of condemnation on those without faith comes through the recognition that no such acts of love flowed from their hearts.

The believers are surprised when Jesus mentions our good works. That is because we realize that love is not the cause of our salvation only the evidence. We do not love with the thought that such actions will save us. Such works of love are not things we dwell upon as if we were special doing them. We live the way in Christ like good grapes grow on a healthy vine.

The last verse of Jesus’ parable speaks about judgment based on works. We must understand his words in the context of all Scripture. Faith based salvation manifests itself in love. Our lack of love, our sinful failures to love God and my neighbor Christ’s blood covers. God does not see them. The Judge points only to the good we have done in faith as the Spirit produces that love. He does not hold us guilty for our transgressions. The Judge bore those transgressions in his body on the tree of the cross.

We will not be surprised when Jesus calls us to enter the kingdom of glory he has prepared for us before the creation of the world.

Unbelievers will be surprised there is a hell. Most of them really do not believe in such a place of eternal suffering and separation from God. Any person who says, "I know I'm going to hell. It doesn't bother me," is either living in denial or is the bravest, perhaps most foolish person alive.

God did not create hell for people but for the angels who rebelled against him in heaven after Creation. God does not want you to go to hell. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. Jesus has redeemed you from that condemnation. That does not mean the Judge will not send anyone to hell. "Whoever does not believe will be condemned."
[Mk. 16:16]

Today is the day of your salvation. It is another day for repentance of our sins. For my sinful nature, the thought of final judgment remains terrifying to curb the Old Adam, to keep him in check. As a Christian according to the New Man, I do not fear the sound of the final trumpet. In an instant, I will be changed if still alive, or my body will rise glorious from death to reunite with my soul. The judgment I heard this morning in the absolution still will stand, "God our heavenly Father has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins." Amen. <SDG>