



## **The Apostles' Creed (Part 8) – From Whence He Shall Come to Judge the Living and the Dead**

Mike Dsane – October 18, 2015

---

[Video]

**Male:** I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth...

**Female:** And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord...

**Male:** Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary...

**Male:** Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

**Male:** He descended to hell.

**Female:** The third day he rose again from the dead.

**Male:** He ascended to heaven...

**Female:** And sits on the right hand of the Father Almighty...

**Female:** From whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

**Male:** I believe in the Holy Spirit...

**Female:** The holy catholic church...

**Male:** The communion of saints...

**Male:** The forgiveness of sins...

**Male:** The resurrection of the body...

**Male:** And the life everlasting.

**Male:** Amen.

[End of video]

Good morning. It's good to see you. It's good to see you at other campuses. I guess technically you can see me; I can't see you. My name is Mike Dsane, and I'm one of the Groups ministers here at the Flower Mound Campus. If you're in Plano or Dallas and Fort Worth, no, you're not mistaken. Matt didn't grow a beard this week. It's a different person. It's good to be with you.

We're going to be jumping back into the Apostles' Creed. For the last seven weeks, we've been just walking through this historic statement that's bound us to church history, bound us to orthodoxy, bound us to belief. Every week thus far, we've talked about things that have been historically accomplished, but stepping into this week of the Apostles' Creed, we're going to be stepping into something that hasn't happened yet.

I think we have a couple of difficulties we're going to have to deal with as we get into this text. The text we're going to be jumping out of is going to be Matthew 25, verses 31 through 46. If you don't have a Bible, there is a hardcover black one that's there for you to use. It's a gift to you if you don't own a Bible. If you're not used to navigating a Bible, there's even going to be a page number on the screen so that way that can help you navigate that.

Let me just talk through the couple of difficulties before we get into our text. I think one I already mentioned. It's everything else we've said we believe has already happened. God the Father Almighty has already created. Christ has already been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He has already suffered under Pontius Pilate. He has already been crucified and buried, but let's go back to English class.

"...from whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead..." *Will* and *shall* are things that haven't happened yet. It seems a little bit bold of us to say, "We're going to stake our trust and our belief in something that hasn't happened yet." An analogy I can give because I've seen it all over

social media recently is all of these comparisons between *Back to the Future II* and what's actually happening in 2015. I don't know. I believed in hoverboards, but they didn't happen yet.

Then, hey maybe the Cubs *will* win the World Series, so maybe we should believe. There's just all this comparison of things. Don't clap for that. It's too soon. The Rangers just lost. It's too soon. You can't clap yet. It seems strange, and it seems really bold to say, "I believe this," but I think it's a good, sweet reminder of where we started with the Apostles' Creed. The first statement is not, "I know," but it's, "I believe." It's not that I understand or have full grasp of, but it is, "I am placing my trust. My heart has tied to this thing, and I believe he shall come to judge the living and the dead."

Here's the other side of it. It's judgment. Nobody gets super excited about the idea of judgment. I don't know everybody's background in the room, but if any of you have been to court, nobody is like, "Yes, I loved standing before that judge." That idea of being judged, whether it's personally or whether it's through an authoritarian figure, judgment is not something we get excited about.

I'm like, "Really? I get *judgment*? I couldn't get 'Conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary'? Everybody loves Mary. Nobody likes judgment. Can I get forgiveness of sins? Everybody is down with forgiveness of sins. Nobody is down with judgment." Here I am doing *judgments*. That's the other challenge we have.

As we move into this, I want to do what we've done every week. We've stood together, and we've read the creed. As we've done that, every time we've done that, we've done two things simultaneously. The first one is we've aligned ourselves with this belief. The creed was used to refute error. The creed was used to create some spiritual formation in the people of God. When we stand, we stand with a thousand years of history and say, "Yes, we believe. We believe these things are true about our God and the ways he has expressed himself and operated in our world."

The second thing we've done is we've rebelled against (or we've stood against) just the popular stories, the popular narratives of our day that have tried to frame the way we think, have tried to disciple our hearts, have tried to unfocus the lenses of the way we see the world. I'm just going to give you two. Each week Matt has given us two popular narratives. I'm going to give you two also. The first one is...

1. *Fatalism*. Fatalism is this idea that, because everything in the future is determined. "I'm helpless. There's nothing I can do. Therefore, the best life for me is I'm just going to abdicate my

responsibility, because it's already been decided." The believer in Christ would push back against that. While we would confess the Lord is sovereign and we are operating within his plan, we would also confess there is a responsibility, and that which he has asked us to do matters. The other extreme to that may not be fatalism, but it would be...

2. *Hedonism*. It would be this idea that life is composed of trying to get the most pleasure possible and avoiding pain. "The best life for me possible is maximizing that pleasure. That's the ruling standard of how life should be. The more pleasure I get, the better life is." The believer would push back against that in two spaces. In one, we all know pleasure runs out. We all know the next thing we've been told that if we get *this* thing our life will be complete and will be awesome, we know in six months, it will be in a box or in a drawer somewhere because it hasn't fulfilled us.

We also know avoiding suffering is not necessarily the best way of life. Oftentimes, the greatest joy is found when the Lord matures us through suffering. When we stand and read the creed together, we're pushing back against these popular notions, these popular narratives of the day that are saying, "This is the way life should be shaped." We say, "No, *this* is the way life should be shaped: by the truth of the Scripture." We are reflecting those things through the statements of the Apostles' Creed.

If you will, will you stand with me? If you're not a believer in Christ, don't feel awkward in this moment if you don't feel like you should stand, don't feel like you should recite. This is a safe place for you. This is a safe place for you to hear and contest and learn. At the same time, if you want to stand and just blend in, we welcome that as well. We'll be reading the creed together.

"I believe in God the Father, creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father Almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen."

You can be seated. Thank you. Let me give us a brief table of contents, and then we'll jump into our text. Knowing this is something that's future-looking, knowing this is something that hasn't been accomplished yet, what's the conversation? What's the point? Even if you have a church

background, to start talking about the second coming and talking about the judgment begins to raise a lot of *how* questions. "What's the sequence? What's the order? What do we expect? How does it happen?"

I'm just going to confess up front, I'm not going to answer those questions for you today. The question I *am* going to answer is the *why* question. I'm going to answer the question of...*Why is this important? What do the return of Christ and the subsequent judgment reveal about his character and his nature to us?* Then after that, we're going to be walking through the grid we've been walking through the entire series. We're going to be talking about symmetry.

How does this balance and more fully develop our hearts? How do we find symmetry, thinking about the return and the judgment? How do we then get a greater clarity for how we see the Lord because of the return and judgment? How do we then find a community? How do we draw those lines of community? Do we make them bigger? Do we make them smaller because of the return and the judgment? Then finally, how do we counsel others and ourselves because of his return and the judgment?

Matthew 25, starting in verse 31. Jesus is actually responding to a question from his disciples. They had been with him, and he had just entered in Jerusalem. There is the triumphal entry. There is this acclamation of, "**Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**" Then right after, the Pharisees and the Sadducees begin to push back, begin to push against Jesus and what seems to be a claim for him to be the soon-coming or the entering king.

As that all goes on, there are different conversations. There are different rejections in the temple, all of that. Then in the beginning part of Matthew 24, his disciples ask him the question, "Hey, how do we know you're going to return? How do we know these are going to be the signs of the end of the age?" He begins to answer those questions. In the conversation, we are at the end of his response to that. He says this:

**"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.**

**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. 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, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'**

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

**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. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, 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.'**

**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?' 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.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."**

When you read the book of Matthew, one of the things that's good to know is there are five major blocks of teaching (they're called *discourses*). This is the final one, and it's called the Olivet Discourse. Jesus is sitting on the side of the Mount of Olives, and he is answering this question.

Previous to this, he had just given some lengthy responses, just kind of detailing, "This is what it's going to look like when the temple is going to be destroyed. This is what it's going to look like when heresy begins to rise or when Christians begin to get persecuted. This is what it's going to look like when the sudden and terrifying day of the Lord, the second coming, happens."

Then he begins to give some parables about readiness. He gives them a parable about 10 virgins and how some were wise and some were foolish and some were prepared and some were unprepared. He gives the story of the giving of the talents and how there were three different

stewards and how two of the stewards were faithful to increase what the Lord had given. One steward just hid it and did not use it.

In both of those metaphors, both of those parables, he is trying to build out this understanding that, "This is coming suddenly, and you should be ready." Then when he steps into this, the conversation changes from parable and metaphor to, "Let me more openly explain to you what's happening." He begins by saying, "When the Son of Man returns in his glory, surrounded by his angels, sitting on his glorious throne..."

One of the things I want you to capture is what's revealed in the return of Christ is his glory. Even think about the contrast of what's happening. I've just told you that in this conversation, he has just gone into Jerusalem, and he has just been refuted and rejected and argued with and accused by the Sadducees and the Pharisees. They are saying, "You're not who you say you are. You don't have this authority. You don't have right." He is saying, "But there is a day that's going to come, that the Son of Man, the one who has been sent from God with a mission on earth, will have a glorious return."

There is a day he'll return, and there will be no dispute. There is a day that he is not going to be sitting on the side of a dusty hill talking to a small group of disciples, but there's a day that all the nations with all the angels will sit around his glorious throne, and no one will dispute in that moment that he is King.

In that return, when that day comes, when the sky cracks open and he returns and we go to meet him, there is not going to be a debate about, "Is he who he says he is?" He says, "The Son of Man will be revealed in glory, sitting on a glorious throne, surrounded by his angels." This will be obvious. I just want to say there's a day that's coming where this future hope and this future belief are not going to seem silly or foolish. It's going to seem obvious, and all will see the glory of the Son of Man.

Then he goes from there, and he says, "The Son of Man will be like a shepherd who is separating his sheep and goats, one to the right and one to the left." I did some research this week because I didn't grow up on a farm, and I don't really know anything about sheep and goats. Here's what I found out. Sheep and goats often are herded together. They spend much of their time together. In fact, the shepherd typically only separates them at the end of the day. He'll put the goats in one place for them to dwell in the night and the sheep in another place to dwell for the night.

The second thing I found out is when they're in their natural habitat doing their natural functions, when they both tend to be dirty, it's hard to see from afar which is a sheep and which is a goat. It's interesting Jesus says, "I the shepherd, I the Son of Man, I the King, I will step in, and I'll separate the sheep from the goats. I'll put the sheep on my right and the goats on my left," as if to say, "At the end of this period, at the end of this age, when I return, I'm going to separate them, and I'm going to separate them rightly. There is not going to be a mistake."

Nobody is going to raise their hand and be like, "Uhm, Jesus. I don't know if you mistook me for a goat, but I really think I should be on the other side." There's going to be none of that. He is a good shepherd with a keen eye who knows, "These are the ones who belong on the right, my side of favor, power, and honor. These are the ones who belong on the left who are anything but." There will be no mistakes that are being made by the Shepherd when he separates them.

Then think about the language he shares with them. He turns to the ones on the right, and he says to them, "**Come...**" I just love the invitation. I just love that he is saying, "Come into the kingdom. Come into my favor." It's almost as if it's the second time he has made the invitation to them. "Hey, come and receive my salvation. Come and receive my mercy. But now I'm saying come and inherit the kingdom, you who are blessed by my Father, this kingdom that was prepared for you from the foundations of the world."

In that word *inherit*... You don't inherit something unless it's given, unless somebody died. As if to say, "Your entrance into the kingdom..." We could read this text, and if we're not careful, we'd say, "Okay, if I feed enough hungry people and give away enough clothes and let enough people sleep on my couch, then I'm going to earn the kingdom." He says, "No, no, no, no, no. You have been blessed by my Father to inherit the kingdom. Because of my death, you have been given a gift. You've inherited the kingdom that's been prepared for you before the foundations of the world."

Before you were even able to commit these actions, the plan was already set in place. I love just the magnitude of the sovereignty of Christ that's displayed in his judgment. He is not being persuaded. He is not being convinced. He is not being manipulated. He from the foundations of the world in the Father says, "This is what we're going to do. This is how we're going to save. This is how we're going to give the kingdom and give entrance into the kingdom."

What's funny to me is the response of the ones who are on the right. They're not like, "Nailed it!" They're like, "Wait a minute. Hold up. We did this right? When did we see you that way?" as if they



were surprised they actually did it. They're like, "Wait a minute. When did we see you hungry, or when did we see you thirsty? When did we see you naked or, as a stranger, when did we see you sick or in prison? When did we stumble upon you in these ways?"

Then see the contrast again. The King who is the Judge who is sitting in glory on his throne associates himself with the lowly. "When you do this for the least of these, my brothers, when you do this for the ones who are disenfranchised and broken and ill-equipped to even resource themselves, when you do it for them, you're doing it for me," as if to say, "Your regard for them is like your submission to the King. The way you've loved them is evidence of your love for me." This is not qualifications to get in; this is evidence of the faith that's already in you.

Then the other side of the conversation. Those who were on the left, it's not an invitation to come, but instead it's a command to depart. They're being told, "Depart. You are now going to the place that's been prepared for the Devil and his angels. You are being sent away from me, because unlike those who were on the right who were faithful enough to live out the faith they had professed, you had no evidence of the work that had been done.

You now did not take the time to feed me when I was hungry. You did not give me a drink when I was thirsty. You did not take care of me when I was a stranger. You did not clothe me when I was naked. You did not visit me when I was sick or in prison."

Again, I'm just surprised at their surprise. You don't see anybody here say, "You don't have the right to say that to me." Nor do you see anybody say, "I'm on the wrong side. You have this wrong." The thing that surprises them is the measure of which Jesus used to find the evidence of their faith. They also say, "When did we see you this way, and when did we not minister to you?" Again, he associates himself with the lowly and says, "When you didn't do this for the least of these, you didn't do it for me."

Then look at how he separates. The left goes into eternal punishment. It's not this temporary slap on the wrist but of eternal link, an eternal consequence, an eternal weight is the punishment. For those who were faithful, they receive life. In this, we see revealed the glory of Christ's return and the sovereignty of Christ to rightly decide those who are inheriting the kingdom and those who are being sent to punishment. We see his sovereignty displayed in those things, but what does that mean for us in this day? I think it...

1. *Creates symmetry in our hearts.* I would say the symmetry balances in this that we have a merciful Judge. We have a merciful Judge who is looking to us and giving us mercy. Maybe the best way I can illustrate it is this. If you're a parent, you are living this, or if you were a kid in public school, you remember this: school fundraisers. I remember all types of school fundraisers, selling Christmas wrapping paper, selling Christmas cookies, selling cans of popcorn.

My favorite one was selling cookie dough. I just love me some cookie dough. They always wanted to incentivize kids to be part of this. They would say "If you sell two of these, you get a bookmark. If you sell five of these, you get this really cool eraser. If you sell a million of these, you get to go to Disney." I was that kid who was like, "Got it. I'm selling a million of these. We're going to Disney." I'd come home, and I'd tell my mom, "Hey, Mom. We have this school fundraiser, and we need to sell a few of these, and I can win a trip to Disney." She'd be like, "How many is a few?"

"Like, a million."

"Son, we're not going to sell a million of these."

"No, no, no, no. If you take it work and Dad takes it work and we take it to church and we talk to all of our family and friends and I stand on the street corner and just start slinging buckets of cookie dough, eventually we're going to get there."

She'd be like, "Son, if all the people I work with and all the people your dad work with and the people at church all love you enough to pay for your cookie dough, why would you not just ask them to help you go to Disney?" I'm like, "Hmm. Mom, will you send me to Disney?" It seemed to be logical to me at the time, but what she was saying to me was, "Why would you work so hard to earn something you ultimately aren't going to be able to earn when you could just ask to receive it?"

In this text as we look at our merciful Savior, here's what's being said in this text. It's not that they gave enough clothes or fed enough people or did enough works, because they could not earn their righteousness. We have said this all throughout this series. The reality of a Genesis 3 world is that our sin has separated us from God.

So God, who is good and holy and righteous and created everything to be good, because of our sinfulness and because of our rebellion, there is a chasm between man and God, and there are no

works we can perform to close that gap. But when the Son of Man came the first time, he closed the gap.

All we've talked about (his living perfectly and his being willing to suffer under Pontius Pilate, to be crucified, to be buried, to descend into hell, and to be raised on the third day) closes the gap. Therefore, there are not enough jars of cookie dough that can be sold to get you in. He has already made a way. We have a merciful Savior, a merciful Judge, who says, "I'm not judging you on the merits of your efforts. You are inheriting this kingdom, and I'm inviting you in."

I would also say we have a just Judge. I think it's important for our hearts to know he is just. Maybe let me say it this way, because I think it's helpful. He is right to punish sin. If sin were to go unnoticed and unpunished and not dealt with, he would not be just. Let's just stretch out that same analogy about selling the cookie dough. How angry would you be if you actually did sell a million buckets of cookie dough, and the kid who sold zero showed up, and he also got to go to Disney? You're judo chopping that kid in the throat. You're just going to be frustrated.

How mad would you be if, on that day, the unrepentant, rebellious sinner who had no regard for God or his mercy gets the same destiny as the person who was faithful to be repentant and submitted to the call of Christ? If those destinies were equal, if the end of the story was equal for both of them, then you would be frustrated, I would be frustrated, and God would be an evil, heinous, untrustworthy judge.

But we have a just Judge who is right to punish sin. We have a just Judge who is right to say, "In my glory and in my holiness, I am asking you to be holy as I am holy. I'm asking you to be submitted to my way and to my will and to be repentant. I'm asking you to conform your heart to my standard and my call." Those who refuse and those who will not repent, they will be judged.

Let me build this out just a little bit more for us. In Genesis, chapter 18, Abraham is conversing with God, and God has told Abraham, "I am going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah." Then boldly Abraham enters into the conversation. He says, "Well, wait a minute. If there are 50 righteous people in the city, would you spare it?"

The Lord was like, "Yes." This conversation continues to go, and the number continues to dwindle. In verse 25 of Genesis 18, he says, "**Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to**

**death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"**

In this moment of impending judgment, of impending destruction, Abraham is saying, "Here's what I know about you. You know who belongs on the right, and you know who belongs on the left. It's just for you to deal with those who are wicked and those who are unrighteous, and you are also so just that you're not going to mistakenly... Not even one of those who are righteous is going to be mistakenly taken. I trust that you, the Judge of the earth, will do exactly what is right, and you can be trusted."

We have both a merciful Judge and a just Judge. Let's build balance in our hearts, because for some of us, we walk in fear and condemnation, and we feel like the next mistake we make is going to be the last mistake we make, and the Lord is going to be done with us. But those who have been redeemed by Christ know the love and the mercy of your Judge.

You stand before him, united in Christ, and you have been declared justified. You've been declared innocent because you stand in Christ and not on your own merits. Regardless of how many mistakes you make, if you are in him, you receive mercy. On the other side, if we lower our standard to just good intentions and good motivations and no pursuit of holiness, there is a day that's coming that sin and evil that is unrepented of will be dealt with by a just Judge.

2. *Creates clarity.* How does this create clarity of how we see the Lord? When we talk about clarity, here's what I know. Christ takes no pleasure in the destruction of the wicked. Again, let me confess and also illustrate. I have a wicked heart. I like it when my enemies get punished. Don't judge me. You do too. Let me give you a story.

When my wife and I were dating, we broke up at one point. She started dating another guy. To protect the names of the innocent, we'll just call him Joe. Joe was small of stature. His name was Joe. His given name was Joe, but my name for him was "Fun-size Joe" because I felt like he'd fit in my pocket. Fun-size. It's not even fair I'm talking trash about a dude. He didn't even end up with the girl. That's not even fair.

They were dating, and at one point, they broke up. She called me to tell me. She said, "Hey, I'm calling you. I want you to hear this from me. I don't want you to hear it from anybody else." In that moment, my heart was like exploding in my chest because I was thinking, "She is going to tell me

she is getting married or she just got engaged." I was in the middle of McDonald's, so I was trying to figure out how not to embarrass myself in McDonald's.

Look, Dallas, I know you're healthy and beautiful and foodies. Don't judge me because I ate McDonald's. I like me a Big Mac. Don't judge me. I was sitting there, thinking, "How am I not going to embarrass myself by wailing in the midst of McDonald's?" She was like, "Joe (and in my mind, I heard "Fun-size Joe") and I have broken up."

Then my heart was exploding in my chest because I was like, "We're getting back together." But I couldn't convey that. I tried to kind of hold it down. I was like, "Hey, are you okay? Is there anything I can do? Do you want me to come over?" You know, just the natural things you would say in that moment.

She got off the phone, and after she got off the phone... There has never been a moment that I've been like, "Poor fun-size Joe. Sky is a really great girl, and I understand how heartbroken you are. We've broken up. She and I broke up a lot of times actually. I know the pain you're feeling. I feel bad for you." That never happened! In my heart, I was like, "That's what you get, punk!" In my heart, if it had been the thing back then, I would have been doing Quan. I would have been all in, because I was like, "That's what you get. That's my girl. Too bad, fun-size Joe."

My heart took pleasure in him losing something and him being on the outside and him being broken in that. It was for my benefit. It was good for me. But Christ takes no pleasure in the destruction of the wicked. We see this theme over and over again in Scripture. If you look at Ezekiel 33, verses 10 and 11, Ezekiel is getting ready to prophesy to the people of Israel, the house of Israel, because of their unfaithfulness to God. This is what the Lord tells Ezekiel he should say to them.

**"And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said: 'Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?' Say to them, As I live, declares the LORD God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?"**

In a moment when judgment should be declared, even in that last moment, the Lord is saying, "But if you would just turn, if you would turn from your evil ways..." It's the same thing we see when

Jesus is in this context outside of Jerusalem, and he begins to weep. Luke 19 shares the story with us. In Luke 19, verse 41, it says this:

**"And when he drew near and saw the city [that is, Jerusalem], he wept over it, saying, 'Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.'"**

Jesus is declaring the destruction of the temple and the judgment that is to come on Jerusalem, and he is doing it with tears in his eyes. We have a merciful and just Judge who takes no pleasure in the destruction of the wicked but would rather have them turn from their evil ways. The reason I mentioned this is it should create some clarity in us that we should not either.

I'm troubled because far too often, we as Christians are flippant with our words (whether we speak them or whether we type them on social media) of casting judgment and declaring who needs to be on the left and who needs to get destruction. Far too often we are not praying they would turn from their wicked ways and end up on the right.

I'm worried we have become too comfortable in our salvation and begin to presume upon the Lord and not have realized... I mean, he is still mighty to save. He is still mighty to correct. He is still mighty to woo out of sinfulness and out of destruction and out of rebellion.

Instead, oftentimes our language and the things we share are rather our judgments and our desire for destruction for those who don't line up with us instead of a desire that they would also receive his mercy. May it not be so. May we be a people who see our Savior rightly and reflect our Savior rightly, because we have a heart of mercy that is dying to see the wicked would turn from their evil ways.

3. *Creates community.* I love reading this text and not only seeing all of the angels but all of the nations, all of the ethnicities, all of the people surrounding the throne. Here's what I love. In the separating of the sheep and the goats, he doesn't say, "Contrary to popular belief, all of you from Texas, you're over here on the right. Everybody else, you're on the left." He doesn't say, "Because you have *this* much in your bank account, you're on the right, but *you're* over here on the left."

What I hear is, "Those who are faithful and righteous are on the right. Those who are unfaithful, unrepentant, and rebellious are on the left." In that conversation, when I see community, I realize, "My family is much bigger than I thought it was."

If Jesus says, "The measure of the evidence of your faithfulness to me, the measure of your evidence of being adopted in the family of God, is that you love my brothers because you are my brother, you love my sisters because you are my sister. Because you've been adopted into the family of God and now you're a joint heir with me, those who are also joint heirs with me, you've cared for them and loved them and attended to them."

If that's the measure, then my family is much bigger than I expected. Here's what I know about having a big family. It's costly, it's invasive, and it's beautiful. Between my wife and me, we each have two siblings, their spouses. Between those families, there are 13 nieces and nephews. Christmas gets really expensive. I won't even lie to you. Don't judge me. Real talk. They get Dollar General gifts. It is what it is.

It's costly to have a family that's that big. It's invasive. If they have need, if one of my sisters calls or one of Sky's sisters calls, there's an understanding that it's going to be invasive. They may need to spend some time with us, or they may need us to speak into an issue or take some time to walk with them. It's invasive, and it's beautiful. It is a good, right thing that when someone in my family is going through a struggle, I should feel the weight of that. I should mourn if they're mourning.

At the same time, if something good happens, whether that's a 5-year-old nephew coloring a picture we can't really discern what it is or whether that's a 16-year-old niece who is getting her driver's license, that's maybe a moment for celebration. I'm not sure about that yet, but that should cause me to celebrate.

In the same way, if our family is bigger than we ever expected, then there should be a weightiness of mourning for brothers and sisters all throughout the world who are being persecuted. There should be a rejoicing when the Lord does things all around the world, whether that's down the street at another faithful church or whether that's from some missionary endeavor. Our family is bigger than it's ever been, and that's costly for us and invasive for us. But man, is that beautiful.

4. *Shapes our counsel.* I think it shapes us in our counsel in two ways. Look at the list of what Jesus was measuring. The list wasn't, "Because you were faithful enough to be burned at the stake..." or, "Because you were faithful enough to stand before the firing squad of persecution..." It wasn't, "Because you sold everything you had and you became a missionary in an unreached place..." All of those things are good and faithful expressions of faithfulness to God, but look at the magnitude of the practical obedience.

I think far too often we build out this idea of being faithful to God as being this big, extravagant act of sacrifice. I think that is true, but I don't want to lose the balance of realizing there's also faithfulness in the practical obedience. Here's what I see in this list. I could be faithful to the things he is laying out today. I could be faithful in the things he is... I can feed somebody who is hungry. I can clothe somebody who is without clothes. I can let somebody sleep on my couch.

That practical obedience is important. May I challenge us and encourage us in this way? When it comes to being faithful to the Lord, yes, it's good and right. Here in a few moments, we're going to talk about what it looks like to do that in the nations, what it looks like to do that in the preaching of the gospel. I also want to challenge us what it looks like going across the street.

For some of us, I want to challenge us, "What does that look like loving and serving and caring for the person in the room next to you?" There is this call to practical obedience that is the evidence and the way in which a disciple walks. It flows out of the naturalness of life. Because of the faith and the mercy I have received, because of that, I am going to share it with others.

Then I think the other way it lands on us is this. It's a call for us to be serious about the proclamation of the kingdom. In 2 Timothy, chapter 4, Paul is ending a letter to Timothy, who is one of the elders in Ephesus. In that, he has been encouraging him to be steadfast in the face of false teaching, in the face of coming days that are going to be uncomfortable for the believer. In that conversation, he starts by saying...

**"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.**

**For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away**



**from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."**

Hear the weight of what Paul is saying. When he is charging Timothy to be faithful, he is charging him by saying to him, "I'm bringing out the big guns. I charge you by God and by Jesus Christ who is going to judge the living and the dead, by his appearing and his kingdom, preach the gospel. Preach the Word."

I know sometimes when we hear that, we think of this context: somebody on a stage standing and proclaiming. But I think the next phrase dispels some of that. There are some of those "in season" moments where it's set up, and it's orchestrated. It is that conversation, but there are also some of those moments that are those water-cooler conversations where you're preaching the gospel.

There are some of those moments where you have been in a conversation with your spouse that has escalated from conversation to argument or with your roommate or with your kids. You preach the gospel by your submission and your repentance to say, "I have been wrong, but I know the Lord is faithful to forgive. Will you forgive me also?"

There are calls to be in season and out of season, ready to preach the good news of the Son of Man coming to close the gap between God and man. There are those seasons where we are called to confront what is in error, to rebuke those who won't listen, and to encourage those who will submit their lives.

In all of that, to be patient and to teach as we're discipling those who don't know. For there will be a day (and it could be *this* day) where people will not stand in the truth of the Word of God but would rather soothe their itching ears with hearing what's comforting and what satiates the hedonism of their souls. But not for us.

For us, we should be sober minded. We should be steadfast. We should endure suffering. We should do the work of the evangelist. We should fulfill our ministry. We should be serious about the proclamation of the kingdom. I want to invite us in to the charge. I want to invite us in to what Paul is saying to Timothy. "Hey, Timothy, the young man I've raised, I've cared for, I've loved, I've seen lead faithfully, keep doing what you're doing. Keep contending for the good of the gospel. Keep proclaiming in all the ways you can proclaim."

For us, I think the question that needs to happen here and all of our campuses is...*How do we, those who are sitting in the seats, be faithful to proclaim?* Some in-season opportunities may be the leading of a Home Group. It may be being part of a short-term mission trip. Even here at Flower Mound, we're getting ready to have a conversation this afternoon about how you can be involved in some short-term mission trips.

At our other campuses, there are conversations that are going to happen where you can be engaged in short-term missions or leading or serving. What we know is that because of Christ and his glorious appearing and his judging of the living and the dead, we ought to be serious about the work of the kingdom and the proclamation of that kingdom.

In fact, most often when the New Testament authors would talk about the coming of the Lord, they would talk about it was near. That nearness was this idea that this is close enough that it should affect you today. Here's my hope. As we hear this, we would feel the weight of the charge, and we would be faithful to preach the Word. We would be faithful to be serious about the business of the kingdom and to proclaim the soon-coming King.

Here's my hope, because I know we have two different spaces in this room. For those of you who are believers in Christ, my hope is this encourages and emboldens you. I hope you think of the day of the coming of the Lord as Paul says at the end of this text we didn't read... He makes a statement that he says, "I will receive a crown of righteousness, but not just me but all of those who have loved his appearing." I hope this encourages you to love and long for the day of his return and that you will stand united with Christ in front of a merciful Judge who will say, "Come inherit the kingdom."

If you're not a believer in Christ, my hope is not that this drives you by fear, but I hope if you see the two comparisons, that one will receive punishment because of their rebellion and their unfaithfulness and their unrepentance and the other will receive mercy, that you'll just choose what's good, which is mercy. You'll choose what is better.

The hope, the reason we do this, the reason we come early and pray, the reason we preach the truth of the Word so boldly is that we hope the Lord will enlighten the eyes of your heart by the hearing of his Word, and you would say, "Yes, I want his mercy." Whichever space you land in, the truth is he will come, and he will judge the living and the dead. He is a just and merciful Savior. Today is a good day to receive him. Let's pray.

Lord, I thank you. I thank you that you are indeed merciful and that your heart, even in the right and righteous punishing of sin and evil, longs that the wicked would turn from their evil ways. You are a merciful and just Savior who weeps as he stands outside of Jerusalem pronouncing judgment and destruction. Lord, I pray that would encourage and embolden the believer. I pray it would woo the unbeliever.

The person who is sitting and debating the claims of Christ, they would hear the standard of their life is not their own pleasure, is not their own ability to merit their salvation. Instead, the measure of their life should be your good and right judgment and they would hear you're offering mercy and they would submit. This morning, Lord, do what words cannot. By your Spirit, open the eyes of hearts. It's in your name I pray, amen.