

Grace and peace are yours through Jesus, who will come to judge all people. Amen.

Judge. It's such a naughty word today. Judge. You hear it a lot. Usually in the sense, "Don't judge me!" In fact, I think the words of Jesus, "Judge not, or you will be judged," might be one of the most-quoted verses in the Bible today. Does anyone want to be judged? Well, what if you knew what the judgment was going to be? When my parents adopted each of my sisters, my parents had to go before a judge. I remember the judge saying, "Now remember, there is no going back on this. Once you adopt her, she is yours. You can't give her back." I know my parents thought, "Yes, please! That's why we are here. We want her. We want to keep her. Forever." They were begging for judgment. Yes, please. Maybe there were a few seconds, on a terrible day when my parents wished they could have given them back, but they certainly never did. They are still their daughters.

Jesus made a similar judgment about you. He knew what he was getting. A sinner from birth. Yet he said, "I claim you for my own. You are my child. There is no going back. I have adopted you as my own. That's my judgment!" Yes, please, Jesus. Judge me that way, as your child. Jesus has never had a single regret in judging you to be his own. So yes, please judge me Jesus! Please declare me your child. Please Jesus, hang on to me and never let me go. Please judge me Jesus! Please judge me Jesus!

Doesn't it sound wonderful that Jesus will come in his glory and all the angels with him. Yes, please come Jesus. Please judge me Jesus. Everyone will face this judgment. All nations gathered before him. And Jesus himself will separate the people, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Sheep stand for believers and goats for unbelievers. But what does this mean? Why sheep and goats? We could mention several things. Sheep are helpless, like believers are helpless before God. Sheep need to be led and are more obedient. Goats tend to be stubborn and do their own thing. Whatever we might notice, the point is the separation. Jesus, the good shepherd can see and can separate. For Jesus it's easy to tell the sheep from the goats, because only he can see the heart.

Notice that first Jesus separates, then he pronounces his judgment. And remember we are saying, "Please, judge me Jesus!" Before we get to the individual words of Jesus and there are many cool words, so much I learned from a detailed study, but before we get to that, let's be very clear about something. Jesus judges based on his grace, not on our works. When we hear the words we might think, "Well, those who are good and do good things go to heaven. And those who aren't good and don't do good things go to hell." But that would be missing out on the rest of what the Bible says. Jesus says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." First, faith in Jesus had to be given before any of these works could be considered good. Jesus even says, "Whatever is not done out of faith, is sin." So for those without faith, all they can do is sin. You see, first Jesus looks at the person and sees whether or not they have faith in him as the Savior, then Jesus looks at the works of the person. For the believer, Jesus doesn't see sin. Those are covered by his blood. For the believer, Jesus only sees good works done out of love for him. Whereas for the unbeliever, all Jesus sees is sin. Those sins aren't covered by his blood. Those sins lay exposed before God. So Jesus, judge me on your gift of faith, please. Don't judge me on the basis of my works. Jesus, please judge by your grace, not by my deeds.

Ok, now we can look closely at these words and look forward to Jesus' judgment saying, "Please, judge me Jesus." The first thing to note is this: Jesus puts the sheep on his right and the goats on the left. I know what our translation says and it's kind of unfortunate. If you look closely at the original language, Jesus puts the sheep on HIS right and the goats on THE left. The sheep have a relationship with him and get to be on HIS right. It's repeated in verse 34 and the left again in verse 41. The right hand is also the position of favor and glory. Everything points toward this wonderful, awesome cool relationship believers have with Jesus.

The very first word the king says? "Come!" Come! Be with me. Come me at my side. Come spend eternity in my loving embrace. You are blessed. You stand blessed. You were blessed in the past and you are still blessed in the present and you will be blessed for all eternity. Take your inheritance. It would be better to think, "Receive your inheritance." Inheritance in the Bible is always a gift of God's love. You don't work for an inheritance. You don't get an inheritance because you always visited mom in the nursing home and you were the one who took care of her. The inheritance is given, purely by grace. We can say that about everything. The blessing is from God. The inheritance is from God. The kingdom is from God. This kingdom was prepared for you. Just for you. God has had this kingdom ready since the creation of the world. Since the time God laid the foundations of the earth, he has had this kingdom ready and waiting for you. You see, God's kingdom is for people. God wants people to be there. God wants all people to fill this kingdom. God wants to take you to this kingdom. So yes, please judge me Jesus. Take me to this kingdom. Please judge me Jesus. Base this on your blessing, your grace.

Then God gets to the evidence that the sheep have faith that covers sin. Everyday, ordinary things. Food and drink. Taking care of strangers. That was a big deal before hotels. Travelers often would come to a town and wait in the city square until someone would invite them in. Jesus even said, "Some people have entertained angels without knowing it." Yes, it's certainly still nice to see people when they are sick. And it's good to see people in prison. That was especially true at the time of Jesus, as prisoners often received little or no food and relied on family and friends to care for them. And those family and friends would often have to provide food or other things for the guards to get the food to the prisoners, so it was more costly than you might think at first.

But did you notice the reaction? First of all, pay attention to who reacts? The righteous. That's the only descriptive word. Righteous. These people are right with God through faith in Jesus. One translation of the Bible rightly calls them, "Those whom God has

declared perfectly holy in his sight.” That’s a mouthful, but it’s the right mouthful. Wouldn’t you like to be judged as perfectly holy in Jesus sight? Yes! Please, judge me Jesus! First, these people were declared perfectly holy, then they did the things holy and righteous people do. First, Jesus looked at the heart. Then he saw the actions. The righteous weren’t keeping track. They weren’t keeping score. They couldn’t even remember doing these things, because it was such a part of what they did.

And the wonderful, blessed, response of Jesus? Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me. Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers. Is Jesus hinting that even his brothers, our fellow believers, will at times need food and drink and be sick and even in prison and just need someone to be the face of Jesus. Man, if Jesus walked in here today, would you give him your seat, get him a cup of coffee, take him out to lunch? Well, Jesus did walk in, 50 times. He’s there in the person on your right, your left, in front of you. Whatever you do for them, you are really doing for Jesus. How cool is that judgment? No wonder we say, “Please, judge me Jesus!”

Now to those on the left, remember not his left, the left, to those on the left. It’s exactly opposite. The first words spoken? “Depart from me!” Ouch! Get away from me. You didn’t want to be close to me while you were on earth, fine! Spend eternity apart from me. The worst part of hell is being apart from Jesus. You stand cursed. Just as the blessing of those on his right is past, present, future, so the curse is past, present, future. That curse? Eternal fire! And remember, eternal fire isn’t the worst part. The worst part is being away from Jesus. That eternal fire was prepared for the devil and his angels. Did you catch that? The kingdom was prepared for people, for believers. The eternal fire was not prepared for people. The eternal fire was prepared for the devil. And those who follow him.

And again, it’s the ordinary, everyday things that gave evidence, or in this case, lack of evidence of their faith. But you might read this and think, “But wait! Don’t unbelievers do these acts of kindness, food and drink and clothes and visit?” Perhaps, but without faith in Jesus, all judge Jesus sees is sin. Whatever is not done out of faith, is sin, in God’s eyes.

Makes us do a little soul searching, doesn’t it? On many levels. Do we really pray, “Please, judge me Jesus?” Do you really want your life laid bare before the Judge of all? Have we always done these, ordinary, everyday things that show our faith, or show our lack of faith? If you were to stand in the courtroom of judge Jesus, would there be enough evidence to convict you as a Christian? Or, would you go to the other extreme and keep track of all your works, trusting in those good deeds to get you to heaven?

The good news? God judged Jesus. God judged Jesus as the sinner so God judges you as perfectly holy in his sight. God declared Jesus the sinner so you are declared perfect. Judge Jesus isn’t looking at your sins. Jesus is looking at his holiness, his blood, his empty tomb. There is rock solid evidence, for all eternity that you righteous. Jesus declared you his child in the most wonderful adoption ceremony. Ever! Baptized you in his name. Said, “I’m never letting go. Devil, I’m not giving this one back. She belongs to me.” Yes, judge me Jesus on this basis. Please, judge me Jesus on your blood, your cross, your tomb. Please, judge me Jesus and declare me righteous.

You see, when that declaration of Jesus, “Righteous!” is finished, which it is, then Jesus sees the works as righteous. The ordinary, everyday. Helping a neighbor rake the leaves or shovel the driveway. I can assure you, visiting someone in the hospital, preaches ten sermons at once. Bringing a meal to a family that has someone recovering, that feels to them like it fell from heaven itself. And thank you for giving me the time to go to prison. Those brothers need God’s Word the same as we do. And they appreciate God’s forgiveness often more than we do. I know you aren’t keeping track. I know you’re not keeping score. You are just doing these things because that’s what Christians do. Christians look forward to Jesus coming. We look forward to Jesus’ judgment. We even say the weirdest thing of all, “Please, judge me Jesus!” Amen.