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# THE FRAGRANT AROMA OF A SACRIFICIAL LIFE

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Rev. Matt Wilson

Wellington Presbyterian Church

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## Matthew 25:31-46

*"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. [32] 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. [33] And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. [34] 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. [35] 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, [36] I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' [37] Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? [38] And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? [39] And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' [40] 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.'*

*[41] "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. [42] For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, [43] 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.' [44] 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?' [45] 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.' [46] And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Read Matthew 25:31-46**

- This is a tough passage that brings pain and guilt to many -- but we must ask WHY IS THAT?
  - Largely, because people live their lives, even professing Christians, opposite of the life of Christ.

**Illustration:** Some months ago I was flying home from a meeting when the man sitting behind me began gasping for breath. An announcement over the plane's intercom called for a physician. Soon a doctor and several nurses came to the man's aid but to no avail. I began to pray for the man and his wife, who was sitting beside him. The pilot announced that due to a medical emergency the plane was going to land in Edmonton. I could hear the activity behind me escalate as the doctor and nurses took turns doing CPR. The sound of air being forced out of a human being's lungs, the sounds and smells of the death rattle were horrific. I heard the doctor pronounce, "Time of death, 10:25 A. M."

And then the captain announced that the passenger's situation had "stabilized," and therefore we would continue to San Francisco. I don't know how many people realized that what was announced as though it was the passing of the emergency was actually a veiled announcement of the passing of this man's life. Certainly those of us nearby knew. The flight attendants pulled a blanket over his head. His wife, still beside him, was sobbing and moaning. And then the flight attendants began to come through the aisles . . . serving lunch! Lunch!? How could anyone in that cabin eat after what had just happened? But they did. (Jews for Jesus, Newsletter, Nov. 2006, p. 1)

- This story in many ways illustrates how our culture thinks and lives.

When someone is in dire need of help, we ignore it in order to satisfy our own appetites.

**In this passage, there are three important points that instructs us how to live our lives to reveal that Christ has given us NEW HEARTS and made us into a NEW CREATION that live NEW LIVES,**

**... lives that are a model of what Jesus did for us.**

## **1. The first point is that Jesus identifies himself with the poor**

- He identifies himself with the lowly, the poor, the foreigner, the widow, the prisoner, the orphan.
  - Those victimized and broken by the effects of sin in ourselves and the world.
- Jesus directly relates our serving of the poor as serving Him.
  - "you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me"
- It is the life of the poor Jesus came to experience - the life of those victimized by a sinful world and injustice. Look at this list he gives us...sounds like our world today...
  - o HUNGRY: starvation from famine & pestilence, THIRSTY: unclean water & drought, STRAGNERS: displaced from war, NAKED: poverty stricken, SICK: disease, PRISON: oppressed unjustly
  - o Jesus himself was Poor, lost Joseph, raised by single mother, homeless, scorned & distained.

### JESUS CAME TO EARTH

- But Jesus tells us that you should have mercy on the poor and afflicted because I once had mercy on you to bring you to where you are.
  - 2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.***
    - o He sacrificed his situation/where he dwelt to come to earth where for him to be here alone was suffering.

### JESUS SUFFERED

#### **It was Jesus who was ultimately rich, sacrificed himself so that the poor could experience wholeness**

- Poor is the condition of being impaired by sin: physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.
  - o This sinful condition lead people to poverty by the continual disintegration of their lives and it lead us to cause poverty in others.

### JESUS GAVE HIS LIFE

- But God in his mercy and love gave His son Jesus to experience the injustice of this world on behalf of the sheep by giving his life.
  - Jesus fully absorbed the anger and wrath of God - taking the full judgment of the blessed.
    - o Many say Jesus died to save people from sin, really Jesus died to save people from God.
  - Because of Jesus' sacrifice... now God is legally bound to adopt those people as His children, making Him their father and them heirs of heaven.
    - 2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.***
  - To those who deserve wrath, but have faith in Jesus & repent by living a new life will be made whole as we are resurrected from the dead.

## **IF YOU TOLD PEOPLE THAT YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE TO IDENTIFY WITH THE POOR OF THIS WORLD, WHAT WOULD THEIR REACTION BE TO YOU?**

## **2. Our treatment of the poor reflects our relationship to Christ.**

*Paraphrase of Jesus in this passage by Tim Keller "If you do not love the poor, no matter what you say, you do not love me. You do not have a relationship with me. It is a formal relationship filled with duty and compliance."*

- Your faith in Christ is reflected in your desire to be associated with the least not the greatest.

Paraphrase of Jesus "The way in which you treat the poor is the way in which you see and treat me."

- Our attitude and treatment of the poor is the horizontal evidence of our relationship with Christ.
  - This is what it means to love your neighbor as you love yourself.

***Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.***

Walk in love? OK, define that - as Christ loved us. OK, what does that mean - he gave himself up for us - That sacrificial life was an offering to God that was fragrant - sweet smelling, pleasing, mouth-watering.

- ILL - Walk outside and smell someone cooking out on the grill - Man, I want some of that!
  - The same thing except here they are talking about the altar where the lamb of God was sacrificed so that poor sinners could be the righteousness of God

***2 Corinthians 2:15 For we are the aroma of Christ to God***

- Believer's and their lives are the same aroma of Christ to God as we give ourselves up as a fragrant offering
  - Our lives are to reflect the life of Christ, it is our moral responsibility and not to be immoral in that we are not exhibiting a life of love to Christ, but a life of love of ourselves.
- **Does your Christian life have an aroma of sacrifice?**
  - **Does your love to Christ cost you anything?**
    - If not, not like Christ's life because you are still guarding your resources, interest, and advantage.
  - This aroma of sacrifice to the least in our community is evidence of real faith it is true fruit of the Spirit.
  - Sacrificial love is the direct result of actual faith - it reveals who are the sheep.

### **3. Either we serve Christ and His Kingdom or ourselves and our own kingdom**

**ILL - The creation of God was made as a unified fabric completely and beautiful interwoven.**

At creation, everything worked in perfect unity together - people, animals, plants, bugs, etc. - fabric

- Thousands of fibers and threads piled up do not make a fabric.
- What makes these threads a fabric is the thousands of interwoven dependencies.
- The more interwoven they are the more beautiful, strong and warm the fabric is.
- All the entities were not made to exist separately, but to be beautifully interdependent.

**This concept is called SHALOM: to be at peace/safe in mind, body, spirit, and community - completed**

**Shalom is the way things ought to be.**

- But sin entered the picture through Adam, and caused the unity of the fabric to breakdown
  - As people live for themselves and for personal gain and advancement - The fabric to unravel.

**The reason Jesus identified w/ the poor, the unraveled fabric, was to bring shalom & rebuild the fabric through the Believers, the blessed ones, the sheep because they are the righteousness of God.**

- People who have abundance (money, resources, and advantages) and they plunge them into the human community, investing so that the parks, school, and communities making a strong community - social shalom.
- But when the people with abundance hold on to their resources and ignore those in need... the spiritual and social fabric of the community unravels - injustice occurs.
- **But as believers live out the CREATION MANDATE they begin to fulfill the GREAT COMMANDS which lead the world toward the GREAT COMMISSION.**

**ILL - George and Potterville**

- A great way to understand what Jesus is saying here is in the movie - It's a Wonderful Life.
- George vs. Mr. Potter. George loves his town and has invested all to make better life for all.
- George even has sacrificed his own dreams of leaving to stay and serve the community - shalom.
- Mr. Potter who is seeking to get rich off the town and uses his resources to buy more of the town property, including George's family community bank.
- **Clarence the angel shows George what the community would look like without him - Potterville**
  - Economic decline, failing businesses, lost its values, filled with addictions, oppression and broken relationships - Potterville is a lousy place to live.

**This story from a wonderful life is a picture of what the word righteousness in the Bible refers to.**

**Biblical definition of righteousness:** People who disadvantaged him/herself for the community. They see that much of what I have is God's to be given to the community... not just believers and the church.

**Biblical definition of wickedness:** Sees his/her resources as belonging just to them. It is all mine for my own advancement. They create their own Potterville.

- Mine is called Mattville. It is a very unjust and selfish place with no room for the least who will bring me down or risk me losing what I have gained.

## **Conclusion**

**What does your life tell you, are you a sheep or a goat?**

**When you hear the call to sacrifice your life how does that make you feel?**

- Does it bother you?
- To die to yourself and live for Christ is the gospel - it is the good news. **Is it good for you?**
  - o Jesus gave his life to save you from yourself and a life of injustice to the needy...where you get more and more.

**There are two reasons why the call to sacrifice may bother you:**

### **1. One reason is that you are a goat.**

Being a goat means that you are not trusting your life to Jesus for your life or your eternity.

- Rather, you are trust is in yourself.
- You trust your life and your eternity to you own wisdom and good works. You believe that you are good enough without Jesus to get into heaven.
- But according to Jesus you are wrong, both blind and misguided.
- The fact that you trust your own works is actually aggressive rebellion against Jesus rather than submission.

**If you are not sure where you stand with Christ - you can become a sheep,**

- You can't become a sheep by going out from here to work hard to earn Christ's favor by helping the poor.
- Sin's damage to you prevents you from ever attending God's acceptance which is based on perfect holiness.
  
- But as George stood in between Mr. Potter and his community so that they may have a better life
  - Jesus too stood in between aggressive rebels & the wrath of God on the cross to give them SHALOM
    - Complete wholeness before God - restoring what sin stole
  
- **To those who trust their lives to Jesus...**
  - looking to him alone for forgiveness & desiring to turn for their lives to serve him
  - it is your wrath Jesus absorbs, presenting you to God as his Child.

### **2. The other reason you are bothered is because you are a sheep who lives like a goat.**

The Scriptures call us to confess and repent of our selfish building of Potterville.

As we embrace that Christ alone is all sufficient for our lives are we to freely give our life away to serve the poor with all the resources given to you by God.

- and through your love the poor will encounter Jesus.
  
- And the fabric of the community with experience healing

**Sermon title:** The Fragrant Aroma of a Sacrificial Life

**Main Point:** Jesus, who was ultimately rich, sacrificed himself so that by faith the poor could experience wholeness.

**Scripture:** Matthew 25:31-46

**Outline:**

Introduction

1. Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ himself with the \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Our \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ reflects our \_\_\_\_\_ to Christ

3. We serve either \_\_\_\_\_ or we serve \_\_\_\_\_.

Conclusion: What does your life tell you, are you a \_\_\_\_\_ or a \_\_\_\_\_?

Slide 1

## The Fragrant Aroma of a Sacrificial Life

Slide 2

Introduction

Slide 3

Introduction

Jesus, who was ultimately rich, sacrificed himself so that the poor could experience wholeness.

Slide 4

1. Jesus identifies himself with the poor.

Slide 5

2. Our treatment of the poor reflects our relationship to Christ

Slide 6

3. We serve either Christ and his Kingdom or we serve ourselves and our kingdom.

Slide 7

Conclusion: What does your life tell you, are you a Sheep or a goat?

**Matthew 25:31 - 46 (ESV)**

BEGIN WITH THE MAJESTY → GRACE AND SOVERIEGNTY

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.

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Then **the King** will say to those on his right,  
    you who are **blessed by my Father**,  
        Come,  
        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  
    thirsty and give you drink  
    did we see you a stranger and welcome you  
    naked and clothe you  
    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.**’

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“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.”

## **COMMENTARY**

### **Calvin -**

Words to emphasize: son of Man, Glory, King, Christ the judge

All nations gather before him - none shall be excused judge the world

Separating the sheep and the goats - Ezekiel 34:18

Lord complains against the goats - fierceness, attack with horns the poor sheep

Destroy pastures, pollute water, lord will take vengeance.

- Existence now is a mixed flock

- Christians ought to beware of the infectious disease of the goats vices

- The holy labor of their life will not be thrown away but commended.

V. 34 - invites disciples to rest

We may endure with patience and tranquility as we look forward to heavenly enjoyment.

"Blessed" refers to grace undeserved and predestined to life into the kingdom prepared beforehand - from the foundations of the world.

- They are heirs - not earners - there is no change of course possible.

- not encouraging people to work for salvation and earn it.

The life of the godly on earth is sadness, banishment, afflicted and poverty stricken - yet they may cheerfully overcome obstacles and be called into a kingdom prepared for them.

- Always remember the inheritance and live for it - no event can gain or steal what was prepared beforehand

Ephesians 1:4

### **France -**

Criterion to judgment is not attitude toward others or God's law but treatment of Jesus' "little bothers".

Possible interpretation is the response of the nations toward the needs of the disciples of God. See Matt 10:40-42.

- The insignificant ones of the greatest in heaven and vice versa (18:3-4)

Jesus is not calling us to mere philanthropy

- ultimately it is men's relationship to Jesus whether they inherit heaven,

V. 31-34 - no middle ground for between saved and lost

Sheep are more commercially valuable - blessed and don't the right (good fortune)

- the hardships are paralleled to the mission of the disciples in ch. 10 (see 1 Cor. 11:23-27 & Isaiah 58:7)

By these acts one prepares for judgment - practical discipleship

The King is incognito in the lowly and humbled person - so go serve your king.

To serve the lowly is to serve Jesus - to walk in his shoes

Illustrations - walking on my father's shoes picture

How you respond to the lowest of the brothers in how you respond to Jesus.

## **Morris -**

- Everyone will be judged on upon his or her use of the opportunities to serve through out life.
- Context - responsibly of disciples and the disciples readiness for the coming of the Lord
- There will be many surprises on Judgment day.

Although this passage only deals with the Fruits of faith as a test of salvation it does not disregard grace or faith. Our fruit is used as evidence of faith - not that works save you.

- We must see the scriptures as interconnected and cannot be separated and contrasted

V. 31 - Context speaks about how those used their talents. Those who increased it and praised by being given a wider work those who hid it were given over to darkness, wailing and gnashing of teeth.

- Although Jesus in his first coming greatly identified with man in his lowly state in service, now he looks strikingly different.

- he comes in glory - which mean his full weight of power, majesty, splendor
- He will not come alone but with a full kingly entourage of angels - the same group that came with him when he came the first time in his birth 100 million.
- He enters as the king before his throne to inaugurate the final state through judgment
- The judgment is centered around him as actions committed for or against Him
  - He started it, he sustained it, He brought it to His conclusion, where he is the judge and he is the standard by which people and nations will be judged to enter into his kingdom to fully experience his glory.
- Jesus now is very intimidating by contrast to us.
- First coming Jesus identified with man in his lowly state, second coming Jesus identifies with God in his holiness and sovereignty.
- This majestic and sovereign King is who you actually rejected when you rejected the lowly Jesus.

V. 32-33 Ezekiel 34;17 the separation of sheep and goat  
Sheep more valuable and prized

V. 34 to those on his right he invites them to

- come
- Father's blessed ones
- inherit the kingdom

- The verb draws attention to the significant aspect that the salvation inherited comes to one as a gift, not as a result of one own earning.

- "prepared for you from the foundation of the world" this has always been God's plan. It is not an afterthought, or an awaited conclusion but the opposite - the plan of God.

V. 35

Acts 2:42 support verse

- The insignificant ones of the greatest in heaven and vise versa (18:3-4)  
Jesus is not calling us to mere philanthropy
- ultimately it is men's relationship to Jesus whether they inherit heaven,

Jesus become poor for us - this is the gospel.

Jesus Christ, God who came to earth was the complete picture of justice

- Completely subdued all creation [miracles] causing them to bear fruit to God's glory
- He extends mercy and forgiveness to
- He is the great deacon who pours himself out in costly service to the poor
- The effects of injustice are healed under his rule

**Genesis** - God gave man dominion over the world to rule with justice

After the fall and man was naked and ashamed God had mercy and clothed them [matt 25]

**Deuteronomy 10:12 - 22 (ESV)** <sup>12</sup>“And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>13</sup>and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good? <sup>14</sup>Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. <sup>15</sup>Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. <sup>16</sup>Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. <sup>17</sup>For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. <sup>18</sup>He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. <sup>19</sup>Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. <sup>20</sup>You shall fear the LORD your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear. <sup>21</sup>He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen. <sup>22</sup>Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.

