


[OPENING SLIDE]

“From Now until Then”

“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.’” (Matthew 25:34)

Introduction

[“Field of Eternity” Video]


 CHRIST IN TIME ... who creates it ... who validates it ... who declares it “good” ... then, who miraculously subjects Himself to/enters it ... who redeems it.

† The bulk of His use of time on this planet was to “grow up” ... engaging in his vocation as an earthly son to his parents ... a friend ... and as a carpenter!

† Then, to alleviate pain and suffering *for a time* – by compassionate living: healing the sick, raising the dead (giving us a glimpse of what will one day be).

† Then, ultimately to redeem humanity ... *you ... me ... “for God so loved the world”* (John 3:16) ... redeeming us *for eternity* to be sure ... but also for time.

TRANSITION: He is still blessing it ... as He graciously gives us ... “our years and our days” ... a sign of His great grace.

 And so, a third “nighttime story” ... US IN TIME ... a gift of grace/for us to use according to His gracious purposes ... our presence as the “children of God” validates it in this world ... redeemed for “good” ... for Him and His purposes.

[SLIDE #2] I’m sure you’ve heard the illustration ... imagining a bank account into which is deposited each day \$86,400 dollars ... free to you, to use how you would ... what you spend poorly cannot be recouped ... what you don’t spend cannot be kept = that’s how many seconds you get in a day ... every day ... a gift!


† Our main purpose in time is to glorify Him/His name ... make known the Gospel ... to live the “dash” on our tombstone ... a great privilege and joy!

† Like the “To Do List” in our text ... not meant to be in any way exhaustive, but reflective of the Gospel and what we are called to do:

† “Feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, shelter to the homeless, clothes to the poor, visiting the sick and those in prison” ... all done to Him!

- “The least of these *My brothers*” = to all yes ... but “especially to those of the house-hold of faith” (Galatians 6:20)
- “If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” (1 John 3:17-18)

† These deeds of love are the “fruit of faith” not the “roots of grace” (Harman, *CPR*, 9:4, 37)

 [SLIDE #3] IN THIS “now until then” living WE ARE “*BLESSED*” (v. 34) ... by virtue of our Baptism and call into faith, part of the roll call!

† Separated (*before* any accounting) ... because of who we *are*, not because of what we've *done* ... “righteous ... given to ... inheritors ... *from before the foundation of the world*” ... we are “called, then justified, and then glorified” ... easily recognizable to the Father because we are covered in that blood bought redemption and righteousness of Jesus! We *are* sheep!

† [SLIDE #4] “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:8-10)

- “By grace ... through faith ... **for works**” ... magnifying who we are in Christ ... fully expressed by what we do *in* Christ.
- “Sheep do deeds of mercy. Goats neglect deeds of mercy.” (Peter, *CJ*, October 2005, 432-433)
- “The elect simply act like the elect.” (Biermann, *CJ*, Fall 2011, 304)

[SLIDE #5] “Someone once said, faith is like calories. You can't see calories, but you can sure see their results!” (Peter, 433)

† Though, admittedly, we do the “sheep” thing poorly... all demonstrating “goat like” behavior ... works not done out of love because we don't always love:

† Pride ... jealousy ... what we get out of it ... how we look ... what we might lose – like the credit we think we deserve ... busy-ness ... sheer neglect.

† [SLIDE #6] But there is still mercy ... and time (again, God's gift of grace) ... where, the point of the parable/the pulling back of the veil reveals our true reality ... motivation to service not out of fear or obligation, but out of love and gratitude for what the Father does, and who the Father has called us to be.

† “*We are unworthy servants; we were only doing our duty.*” (Luke 17:10) ... getting to serve *Him* by serving others ... how cool is that?

† Therefore, as this day – this church year – is drawing to a close, and Christ draws nearer by the hour ... be sheep ... be who you are ... “*blessed*” ...

- Mend or heal a relationship.
- Show grace in a situation or circumstance where it's not expected.
- Be spontaneous with a gift – a “random act of kindness.”
- Be the needy one ... swallowing your pride ... asking for help ... letting someone serve you.
- [SLIDE #7] “*Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*” (2 Corinthians 6:2)

† “No deed of service, regardless how obscure insignificant, or unappreciated is ever wasted or lost. Jesus keeps track.” (Biermann, *CJ*, Fall 2011, 304)

Conclusion

[SLIDE #8] In 1304, Giotto di Bondone began working on a series of frescoes in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua (N. Italy). At the very back of the chapel is the Last Judgment. Where, by necessity, the painting was done quickly – but the image is eternal – the scene covering the entire back wall. [SLIDE #9] At the bottom of the image, under the cross, is the doorway by which worshipers enter the world ... Christ returning in glory.

[SLIDE #10] We possess a beautiful Gospel ... the Lord offering us “an image of the last judgment to shape your life in this world today. As you walk through the door, opened by the cross ... you see things differently: the creation of this world, your Lord, even your life of service. Assured of your salvation, you now rejoice in ... this vision of life,” eternal ... in time – this time, our time, God's time. (Schmitt, *CPR*, 21:4, 38) “*Redeem the time.*” (Ephesians 5:16) What you do in Christ's name matters. It all matters! *Amen.*

[Friday E-mail:]

So ... what are you? Are you a sheep or are you a goat? That's the pressing question in the 3rd of Jesus "night time" stories from Matthew 25. It's a most familiar text, one that from the very first time you read or heard it, you probably never forgot it. Where, perhaps, you already know the answer to *which* you are. But do you know why? And how is it that we've "become involved in this unearthly scene ... to be herded like an animal?" I mean, can we truly know? And if we think we're on the wrong side, can we change sides?

You may recall the story of the 19th century Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel, who awoke one morning to read his own obituary in the local newspaper: "*Alfred Nobel (the obit stated), the inventor of dynamite, who died yesterday, devised a way for more people to be killed in a war than ever before, and he died a very rich man.*" Actually, it was Alfred's older brother who had died; a newspaper reporter had bungled the epitaph. But the account had such a profound impact on Nobel that he decided that he wanted to be known for something other than developing the means to kill people efficiently, and amassing a fortune in the process. So he initiated the Nobel Prize, the award for those who foster the betterment of humanity and peace. Nobel said, "Every man ought to have the chance to correct his epitaph ... and write a new one."

Well, until this gets worked out for you on Sunday, let me direct you back to the Good Shepherd. Let me direct you to the One who has called you into the pen. You know His voice. You've known the joy of having been brought home on His shoulders rejoicing.

On *that* basis, what are you? Sheep or goat? Sermon over!?

But not completely ... for out of that blessed declaration comes a desire on the part of the disciple to follow the lead of the Good Shepherd ... to follow Him into a world in which there is not only great need ... but also a need for those to address such need in the Savior's name. It's not the works that get us in the pen or on the right side of the fence, but those acts of love and service *are* the expression of His love to us that ultimately find their way into the world, and into the lives of those who need us ... who need Jesus.

So what are you? Sheep or goat? The answer's obvious. Wherein, that answer is one that is written both in the creeds, as well as in the deeds of those whom Jesus calls to Himself. Yes, who are you? And who will you serve today?

Baa, baa, baa ... SYOS!