

“The Difference between the Blessed and the Accursed”

There are rules that the winners of the lottery should adhere to. First, stay silent. Second, go get the winnings in a month or two. Third, don't do anything like press conferences. Fourth, change your home phone and mobile phone numbers right away. Fifth, move immediately. Sixth, travel abroad for at least a month. Seventh, don't tell your family about winning.

Eighth, change your bank account pin number and online password. Ninth, don't laugh happily, and always keep your expressionless. 10th, abandon all your friends and loved ones, so you won't have to worry about them taking advantage of you.

If so, is winning the lottery a blessing, or is it a curse? From what is listed above, this does not appear to be a blessing at all. Likewise, there are things in the world that seem like blessings but are actually curses, and things that are like curses but are actually blessings.

Some may understand the passage of “The Final Judgment” in today's text as propaganda for God's creatures He likes. But practically, today's parable has nothing to do with sheep and goats. The key point of this is the “clarity of the judges” in the last few days.

In Israel, shepherds separated sheep and goats so that they could sleep comfortably at night. Sheep and goats were allowed to accompany them during the grazing day, but once they returned to the barn in the evening, the sheep were resistant to the cold and the goats were weak to the cold, so they had to spend the night separated from each other.

Today's text shows that just as the sheep and goats do not have a third place at night, the people of the world in the last days are divided into those who receive God's blessing and kingdom and those who are cursed to an eternity in fire. There is never a middle ground between these two. Perhaps, because we have heard these spiritual warnings repeatedly, we may be dulled by them.

I will not repeat the spiritual warning of this parable. Instead, I would like to tell you how, in that last, irreversible division before us, all of us will be sent to the place of blessing, not suffering.

To make the talk easier, let us separate those in front of God's judgment seat into Group S and Group G. There is one thing we should consider here. According to God's judgment in today's parable, are those in Group G those who did evil or did not do good? We usually treat him as a good person if he does no evil. Also, don't we believe that we, who act like them, will go to heaven?

But not only did Group G do bad things, they also always believed they were doing good things for the Lord. Indeed, it is shown to us that they did good deeds. But why did God proclaim eternity in fire on them? We must find the exact spot where the blessing and the curse came to be divided.

Group S did not even remember that they had done good for the Lord. By no means are they humble before the Lord. They are not dementia patients or people without discernment. But why couldn't they remember their good works for the Lord?

I think the first reason is that they routinely did good deeds. How many of us remember what we ate at each meal during the week? The reason we don't remember it is that our three meals a day are very common and ordinary. It is abnormal for someone to remember every single meal, isn't it?

Just like eating, we need to make it a habit to do good deeds through countless practices to the point where we do not remember when and how we do good deeds, and we should strive not to feel the need to remember them.

However, some people do good deeds for show. They take pictures of the scenes of their good deeds, write articles, and report them in newspapers. For this, you have to dress up and waste a lot of money to mobilize human resources. Of course, this is better than not even doing such good works, but fake good works can make even our souls sick with fakeness.

When looking at the data from the remaining records, the events they had are always vividly remembered over time. But hidden behind the event are the forgotten, weak, and needy people who are being used at the event. These people who do good works for show have no interest or zeal for good works that they do not publicly disclose.

As we look at the text, we learn that our good works can save people, but sometimes they can kill people. Group G seems to have classified and discriminated against the objects of good deeds according to their social status. They were waiting for the Lord to come to them only through certain opportunities. They ignored the truth that the Lord could reach them at any time, in any environment, and in any form in the world.

They insist that they have served the Lord, but in fact, the Lord insists that they never did. Until their last hours, they were deceived by the vain truth. If we were to be involved in this case, what would we be rewarded with? This is truly a sad event that cannot be erased from human history. The Lord is desperately wanting this not to happen to us, so He is telling us this parable.

Let us listen to the apostle Paul's confession in 1 Corinthians 9:27. "I harden my body with blows and bring it under complete control, to keep myself from being disqualified after having called others to the contest." Even the mature Paul makes this confession because, as our faith matures, we can see the weakness of our underlying human nature.

I hope that this time you greet each other one by one, making eye contact with your church friends around you. Each one of them is a blessing and a helper to guide you to the kingdom of the Lord. Let's bless each other with "I love you" at this time.

Today's text presents one slogan we need for our good works. It is, "Let's always treat the most insignificant person like God!" Of course, I do not mean we should worship them. However, we must have eyes of faith that can find the face of God in our surroundings, and we must strive to love others as God loves us.

Have you ever thought about the motive behind why you are doing good deeds? Sometimes we also need good deeds that people remember because they give us validation, confidence, and encouragement. However, we must learn 'the good works that the Lord is satisfied with through me'. Then He makes joy spring out of our souls.

It happened four years ago when I was serving Borrego Springs United Methodist Church. One sunny early spring day, I walked to the church for morning prayer and saw a man sleeping on the back lawn. He had no tent,

only a sleeping bag, and a bike next to him. After he woke up, I chatted with him. His face was still dark, and his head was shaved.

At that moment, I thought that, for me, who couldn't go far for relief, the Lord had sent a neighbor in need of my help by my side. He was imprisoned for many years before being released a few days ago. His family was scattered, and he said that he would ride a bicycle to find his family in Mexico. He asked to stay here for three days, so I granted his request. During his stay, he cleaned the area around the church and even the shower room.

On the morning of the third day, I brought eggs, milk, butter, and bread from home, made breakfast in the church kitchen, and served him. It was a congratulatory gift I gave him to celebrate his release. I also wanted to let him know that there are people in the world who accept and recognize him for who he is.

That day, I blessed and prayed for his future, and we had to say goodbye to each other. Someday he and I look forward to being together, the blessed ones of the Lord, to meet in the Father's heavenly kingdom.

Evangelist D. L. Moody said, "Many people love with their words and tongues. But godly people love with their hands and actions." Although we are in one church, we come from different backgrounds, careers, and experiences. But in order for us to serve the Lord and our neighbors, we must confess that we are all members of one community called "Jesus' Love".

How can we, who are so insignificant, act as if we were dealing with the Lord? What is the way there? For us, the most necessary and important thing for that is to establish a full and "thankful heart" for the Lord within us. What you did in the past, what you do now, and what you will do in the future—everything is possible because the Lord guides your path.

Last Monday, Euni and I went shopping at Costco. The cashier had been counting our items for a while. The assistant cashier told us that the 20-pound plastic bag of organic sugar we had picked up was bursting. He offered to bring us a new bag of sugar, and we paid the total, which included the cost of the sugar, and finished checking out. We hurried to the exit and drove home. As I was organizing the things I had shopped for, I

remembered that we hadn't picked up the sugar bag. Euni made a quick call and managed to get a credit from Costco.

I pondered for a moment. Today I presented my receipt to the inspector standing at the exit, and he drew a long line through my receipt with a colorful highlighter marker as a sign that everything was correct. So, what did that inspector's actions mean, and what effect did they have?

So, one day, when I stand before Jesus Christ at the Last Judgment, will the mistakes of the Judge at that time bring me any good fortune? No. No one will escape his stern and blameless judgment at that time. Comparatively, there will be no mistake or absurdity on the part of the judge there. Then we will never be deprived of our joy.

We will not be fully aware of the blessings and joys the Lord has prepared for us until we awaken from the Father's kingdom again because it is impossible to fully explain them in the way of this world." The Lord's rule of judgment in the last days is not only for the last days of mankind but for our daily lives now.

Because the judgment of the last days to be given to us is the result of who and how my life has been used today. Let us always pray and confess, "Lord, guide me; I will follow." From then on, you will be where the Lord works, and the Lord will be where you work. Amen!

Reflection and Application for Today's Sermon:

1) Meditate on verse 31. If you were standing now before the Son of Man on the throne of glory for the final judgment, what would be your greatest regret and your greatest joy?

2) Meditate on verse 40 of our text: "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me." Who does the Holy Spirit remind you of as the object of "that one person," and what does he instruct you to do about it?

3) What do you think is the crucial difference between "everlasting punishment" and "everlasting life" mentioned in verse 46? How does that difference challenge you to desire "everlasting life"?