

Joel Breidenbaugh

(Matthew 25:31-46)

**Intro.** In one of Casting Crowns’ hits from a few years ago, the song “Does Anybody Hear Her?” is a story about a girl either near a church or visiting a church, but nobody pays her enough attention to minister to her in her time of need. It’s a moving message that should compel us as Christians to stop & notice the needs of others. As we wrap up the series “Good to Great Church,” today we look at Matthew 25 on the subject of “Hospitality.” When it comes to hospitality, think of the church’s friendliness or Christian love shown through warmth & welcome. Some people who step into a church building for worship do so as a last resort. A struggling marriage may result in a husband or wife trying to prove to his/her spouse that he’s willing to work on his marriage & get the help he needs from the Lord. Or someone struggling with drugs & alcohol addictions attends worship as a desperate cry for help. Or someone who has been questioning God but decides to give church a try quietly slips into the back of a worship service. Once I told my old man, ‘Nobody likes me.’ He said, ‘Don’t say that—everybody hasn’t met you yet’” (Rodney Dangerfield, *I Don’t Get No Respect*). How we receive guests & the love they feel or lack thereof could determine whether they ever return here or anywhere else.

Theme: Hospitality; Christian Love

Background: One of the main themes of Matthew’s Gospel is Jesus & the kingdom of heaven—it had already begun to be fulfilled with the coming of Christ but it hasn’t been fulfilled completely.

➤ Before focusing on “Hospitality” exclusively, let me share with you a few basic observations with some interpretation on this passage:

**1. Jesus is the King who is coming in glory (25:31, 34, 40)**

- Jesus’ favorite self-designation is “Son of Man” & He is going to be the King over His kingdom
- As the angels tell us in Acts 1, Jesus will return in the same manner in which He went—He ascended visibly, physically & victoriously & that’s how He’ll return

Illus: Shortly into my marriage, Annthea & I were traveling with her mom & step-dad around greater Louisville. As we were crossing a bridge from Kentucky into Indiana, their CD player started the song by the Gaither’s “The King Is Coming”—I said, “Boy, what perfect timing. Heading into God’s country & the first thing we hear is “The King Is Coming!”

**2. Jesus is also the Judge over the final judgment (25:31-33)**

- Not only is Jesus the King sitting on His throne, but He acts as the end-times Judge over the Final Judgment (see also Daniel 7:13-14)

Illus: You ever had your kids come to you as a parent or grandparent & kid A tells you what kid B has done & then kid C pipes in & tells you kid A is not as innocent as he sounds & you have to make a judgment as to who did what & what kind of trouble they should be in? With Jesus as the Judge, He always makes right judgments & He knows who are His (the sheep) & who don’t belong (the goats)

**3. The sheep receive eternal life because they lived out their faith with hospitable service to those in need (25:34-40)**

- This story doesn’t mention the necessity of faith, but it refers to Jesus as King & those who are part of His kingdom are His subjects who become His subjects by turning from their sins (“repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” 3:2; 4:17) & trusting in Him (cf. 16:13-20)
- The Bible makes it clear that no one is saved by their works, but by God’s grace received by faith in Christ. Genuine faith, however, expresses itself in good works. Good works, which aren’t grounded in faith in the unique work of Christ on the cross, won’t save you, because our best efforts are filthy rags in God’s eyes.

Illus: You may have learned that the Pope just declared Mother Teresa to be a saint. God’s Word says all genuine believers are saints, but the Catholic Church looks at it differently. I cannot tell you what Mother Teresa’s personal faith was, because I don’t know, but if she simply relied on her good works to get her into heaven, then she failed & so will you

**4. The goats receive eternal punishment because they lacked hospitable service to those in need, proving they never had genuine faith (25:41-46)**

- People can do some things, even claiming they are doing them for the Lord, but that doesn't mean they know Him, because Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven" (7:21), but only those who do His will
- Often times we get so busy focusing on our needs & our wants that we neglect those in need around us—Jesus may have had the poor & downtrodden in mind, but the context probably points to the treatment of fellow Christians, who would become poor & persecuted in Roman society & thus lacking basic needs of food, water, clothing, freedom & the like

**5. Notice the contrasts between the sheep & the goats (25:34, 41, 46)**

Elements of the Contrast	Sheep (25:34, 46)	Goats (25:41, 46)
Jesus' words	Come	Depart from Me
Identity	You who are blessed by My Father	You cursed
Future	The kingdom/eternal life	Eternal fire/punishment
For whom it was prepared	For you from the foundation of the world	For the devil & his angels

**So what? What should I do with this passage?**

**1. Show hospitality (friendliness) to people in need (cf. Hebrews 13:1-3)—personally, financially**

- The Bible urges us as Christians to show brotherly love to other believers, including those who are strangers to us or believers who are in prison (probably for their faith)
- We should also reach out through Christian ministries aimed at helping feed the hungry, providing clothing to the poor, prison ministries & more

**2. Show hospitality (friendliness) to guests who visit our church (cf. 1 Peter 4:8-10)**

- God's Word says we are to love each other & show hospitality without grumbling, using our gifts to serve others (1 Peter 4:8-10)
- Hospitality makes people feel at home—say "hi" to people & talk to them a bit, go out of your way to meet people you don't know, invite people into your home or out to eat

Illus: "Some folks make you feel at home. Others make you wish you were" (Arnold H. Glasow)

Illus: We've had multiple guests attend our church & leave & give us feedback later & say no one ever spoke to them—may that never be said of Sweetwater again!

- When I think of hospitality, I think of people like Shirlene Wilkerson, Sarah Taylor, my mom, Billy Joe & Carol Thompson, Chris Evans—they immediately make people feel welcome & at home
- A couple of months ago, we were visiting friends & former members of this church, Justin & Shelley Braniff, & we attended church with them, which they kept comparing to FBS—one thing which caught my attention was after worship was over, Shelley made a beeline for some young couples she didn't know & introduced herself & handed them a note card with her name & contact information & her SS class' name & teacher as she invited them the following week—that couple is the most welcoming couple I've ever met

**Conc.** Jackie Robinson was the first African-American to play major league baseball. Breaking baseball's color barrier, he faced jeering crowds in every stadium. While playing one day in his home stadium in Brooklyn, he committed an error. The fans began to ridicule him. He stood at second base, humiliated, while the fans jeered. Then, All-Star shortstop Pee Wee Reese came over and stood next to him. He put his arm around Jackie Robinson and faced the crowd. The fans grew quiet. Robinson later said that arm around his shoulder saved his career (Leadership). You taking the time to lovingly embrace someone else may be just what the Lord uses to save a lost person. You may be asking the question, "Does anybody hear me? Does anybody see?" Hopefully, we as a church will see you, but more importantly, Jesus Christ the Lord sees you & loves you & has given His life for you & desires your repentance of your sins & trust in Him. Do you hear Him?