

Grace at the Final Judgment

Scripture Reading — Matthew 25:31-46

“Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance ...”

Matthew 25:34 —

From a quick glance at today’s passage, we might think that we earn entrance into heaven by feeding the hungry, giving the thirsty something to drink, inviting the stranger in, clothing the naked, looking after the sick, and visiting the imprisoned.

But the King does not say, “You are about to be blessed.” He says, “You who are blessed,” which could just as well mean, “You have been blessed.” The blessing is not given at the final judgment because we did these simple things. The blessing is given to us right now. God is our Father, and Christ is our Savior, so helping others is our joy right now. That is the blessing.

Look again and see how Jesus’ words are filled with grace. “Come” is an inviting word of grace. An “inheritance” is not a reward for good behavior; it’s the result of being part of God’s family. A “kingdom” is out of all proportion to the simple deeds Jesus mentions. And God “prepared” it long before we were born, before we ever thought of doing anything for anyone else.

Our entrance into God’s presence turns out once again to be thoroughly and totally a gift from our Father in heaven, who has blessed us lavishly and yet notices, remembers, and gives us compliments on even the smallest things we do for others.

Grace at the final judgment!

Prayer

God of all grace, we thank you for the gracious blessing of helping others now and anticipating eternal life with you in the future. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

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