

ENTITLED



Entitled Sermon Series

Message 4 of 4

Matthew 25:31-46

“What it Looks Like to Serve Jesus”

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Introduction

Well welcome back, and I have just so enjoyed journeying through God's Word with you. We've got one more passage for you in this sermon series, it's from Matthew chapter 25, so we're going to do things just a little bit differently with this one. If you will, open up to Matthew chapter 25 starting in verse 31. We're going to read this and then we're going to pray together.

Matthew 25:31-46

Jesus has just a little bit more time with His disciples and so He's giving them some kind of last-minute teaching, and last things that He wants to leave with them, and this is something that He leaves with them, and I think for all of us, it should be pretty sobering. So, Matthew chapter 25 starting in verse 31, we're going to read through verse 46 together, so follow along with me, whether it be in a paper Bible or on the Bible app on your phone, or tablet, wherever you got it, follow along with me here in Matthew chapter 25, this is what Jesus teaches us, He says,

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. Before for 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 He will place on the left. 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. 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, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you as a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when 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.’

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 will answer, saying, 'Lord 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, 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 the eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Opening Prayer

This is a sobering teaching from Jesus, at least it should be for all of us, and so before we dive in here, would you just join me in prayer, asking for God's help to really help this to sink into our hearts, as we've talked about several times, that this wouldn't just be something we hear, but something that we put into action in our lives. Pray with me. Father, again as we've gathered here together I just pray that you would help us to interpret this the best way that we possibly can. That you would help us to apply it to our lives. That we wouldn't just be hearers of these things but doers. Jesus, thank You so much for your good and your perfect Word, and as we dive in today, and talk about what this means for our lives, Holy Spirit, again, I pray that You would guide us; soften our hearts to what it is that Your Word has for us, that we wouldn't be people that just go through the motions. We wouldn't be people who say, "We're doing all the right things, but our hearts are far from You," but Jesus, our hearts would be close to You, that we would be molded by You, that we would be able to be affected by Your Word, that we would be able to go out, because of the relationship that we have with You, Jesus, that you made possible by dying on the cross, because of that that relationship, that we have, that we would be able to go out to do the things that You've called us to do. As Ephesians chapter 2:10 says, that you have things that You have prepared for us to do, good works, Father, I pray that we would walk in those things, that we would do those things well. That we would be faithful to what you've called us to do. And it's in the precious, life-changing name of Jesus we pray, amen.

Opening Illustration

Hey, when I say the words, "serving God," what do you think of? Maybe it's volunteering in the church nursery (and I'm sure they definitely need your help out there, so if that's what God's calling you do please do that), but maybe it's something a little bit different. Maybe for you it's "Man, serving God, that's what the pastor does on a Sunday morning when He preaches that's serving God." Maybe for you, you think of going out once a week and volunteering at the local homeless shelter. Maybe for you, you think of volunteering somewhere else, or helping out in another part of the church ministry. What does that look like for you?

You know, for many people, we have a very specific idea of what that looks like, but I think what Jesus is trying to teach us here in Matthew chapter 25, as He's teaching his disciples and He's giving them this teaching before He'll go to the cross, I think He's trying to teach them, "Hey, it probably looks different than what you have in your head." Serving Jesus often times looks far

differently than what we would like for it to look like. You know, for me I want it to look a certain way that I'm comfortable with, that I'm good with, and that's really easy for me to do, because I've done it several times and that's good enough, but outside of that, that gets really difficult! And yet, Jesus often times calls us to things that are really, really difficult, as we've talked about before.

Point #1: We learn that simply “checking the Christian box” doesn’t get us into Heaven

Go back with me here to Matthew chapter 25. He talks about what it really looks like to serve Him. He says, right at the beginning, “When the Son of Man comes,” He's talking about at the end of time, Jesus is returning, and then, He's going to sit on His throne and before Him, He'll say, that all these nations are gathered before Him and He's going to separate one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and He's going to place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. This is a sobering verse, in my opinion one of the most sobering in all of Scripture. Why? Because it teaches us one simple truth. By looking at this and what it looks like to serve Jesus, it teaches us that simply checking that “Christian box” off on the survey doesn't get you into Heaven. Simply saying that you're a Christian or going to church, even weekly, like those things don't get us into Heaven. Those things don't save us!

Point #1 Support

In fact, in Matthew Chapter 13, Jesus will lay out all these parables. In Matthew Chapter 13 (if you have a moment this week go and read Matthew Chapter 13. There's parables that Jesus teaches on the Kingdom of God and this is an amazing picture that He lays out here), here's one of the parables that He lays out, it's the parable of the weeds, that He says that there's this farmer, and he's got this huge field, and the enemy has come in and he's spread weed seeds into his field. And so, as they start to grow up, the servants are noticing that there's these weeds within the field, and so they're like, “Hey, do you want us to get these weeds out?” and this is what the master of the field tells the servants to do, this is what he says, he says, let them grow together. This is Matthew 13:30 says, **“Let them grow together until the harvest and at the harvest time I will tell the reapers, ‘gather the weeds first and bind them in a bundle, in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”** He gives this picture exactly like He's giving the picture in Matthew chapter 25, that there's going to be, at some point, this separation from people who just claim Christianity, to people who have a true saving relationship with Jesus.

I said that this is one of the most sobering verses in all of Scripture. I think it's tied with what Jesus teaches in Matthew chapter 7. This is towards the end of His Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew chapter 7, starting in verse 21, He says, **“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in Heaven.”** He goes on to say, **“On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name? Did we not cast out demons in Your Name, and do mighty works in Your Name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me you workers of lawlessness.’”** Jesus is laying out this mistake that so many people will make, that they want to do all of these good things for Jesus, and they'll say, “Hey Jesus, I did this, and this, and this! I helped out in the church nursery, and I went to the soup kitchen and I fed people, and I did all

these things that should get me into Heaven, right?” And Jesus makes it very clear in His Word to say, no it's not the good things that that you do that save you, it's the saving relationship that we have with Jesus that saves us. And so, we can't earn our salvation, and make that mistake, we also can't make the opposite mistake which is just to claim Christianity and not do anything with it.

The book of James will talk about this mistake when He says it, in James chapter 2 starting in verse 14, it says, **“If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the good things needed for the body, what good is that? So faith by itself”**--look at this, James 1:17—**“Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”** So, we have the two mistakes there, right? The people that want to do all of the things, but not have a relationship with Jesus, and then we have the opposite mistake which is to say, “Oh, you know what, I'm going to claim to have a relationship with Jesus, but I'm not going to do anything with that. I'm not going to step out in faith and do the things that God has called me to do.” Both of those things are mistakes, and yet both of those things can be paraded around as checking this “Christian box,” right? And Jesus, He makes it very clear. He says, “Listen, I don't want you to make any of those mistakes either!” Both of those are mistakes, don't make either one of them!

Point #2: We learn that a saving relationship with Jesus is necessary for salvation

So, what is the thing that we are to do? Well, I read this verse earlier in this series for you, but I want to read it to you again. It's from Revelation 3:20. It says, **“Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him, and eat with him, and he with me.”** Ephesians chapter 2 says, **“By grace you've been saved, through faith. This is not your own doing, it's a gift of God, not a result of work so that no one may boast.”** What saves us? What saves us is a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. The fact that God Himself humbled Himself to be born next to animals, in a barn, being laid in a manger, living a sinless life, and yet going to the cross and dying this horrific, torturous death, that Jesus went through on our behalf. Why? Because we've sinned. Jesus' death paid the price for our sins, and His resurrection from the grave gives us new life in Him, and accepting that it's a free gift that God says here, it is, “You're worth it! You're *entitled* to My love.”

Point #2 Support

As we've been talking about throughout this series God looks at you and he says you're *entitled* to it because of who I am, not because of anything that you've done, but because of who God is. You are entitled to His love because of God's character! Because He is a good God, who loves you with everything that He has. And He looks at you and He says, “You're worth dying for.” God says, “I love you, and I want to give you that gift,” and it's your job to say, “I accept that gift, I accept you Jesus, I repent of my sins, I accept Your sacrifice on the cross, I accept You as my Lord and Savior,” or to deny that free gift. And remember, as we've talked about earlier, it's only Jesus that saves us. John 14:6, Jesus makes it very clear when He says, **“I am the way, the truth, and life, no one comes to the Father except through me.”** Acts chapter 4 puts it like this, **“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under Heaven, given among men, by**

which we must be saved.” Jesus says this in John chapter 15, he says, **“Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me.”**

So here, Jesus is, He's wiping out both these mistakes! And He's saying, “Okay listen, it's not just claiming Christianity and not doing anything with it, it's also not trying to do everything within Christianity without a relationship with me. Jesus is saying, “No, no, no, no, it's both!” It's, you have a relationship with me, and that relationship is allowed to affect the way that you live your life. That's what John chapter 15 is all about! Jesus saying, “Abide in me, and I in you, and then you will bear fruit.”

Point #3: We learn that your fruit is evidence of your relationship with Christ

So, here's what else: I think that we learn from Matthew chapter 25, simply this, in verse 35 He says, **“I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. And 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.”** What do we learn from this? We learn that this relationship that we have with Jesus needs to affect what we do. Your fruit -- this is what I think we learned -- your fruit is evidence of your relationship with Jesus Christ. What comes out of your life is evidence of your relationship with Jesus Christ.

Point #3 Support

So let me ask you this: what's the fruit of your life? What are the conversations that you're having? Jesus will say, “From the overflow of a man's heart, his mouth speaks.” What are the things that you talk about, that you think about? What are the things that you do? Is it the fruit of your relationship with Jesus, or is it you wanting to look good in front of other people? “Oh, I'm going to go do all these things for the church so I can get the praise, and then everyone can thank me, and that's great!” That's not what it's all about! Jesus says, “I want you to do these things for me!” As He said in this passage of Scripture, “What you've done to the least of these, truly you've done onto Me. And what you've not done onto the least of these, truly you've done on to Me.”

Listen, it's a “both and”! It's having a relationship with Jesus and allowing that relationship with Jesus to be a transforming power within your life, so that you can go on and do the things that He's called you to do! Romans 2:13 puts it like this, **“For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.”** Does that sound familiar to you? Does that remind you of a certain Bible verse that we've talked about throughout this sermon series? Maybe James 1:22 comes to mind, it says, **“Be doers of the Word, not hearers only, deceiving yourself! Jesus Himself, in Luke chapter 6, as He's teaching this crowd of people alongside His disciples, will say, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I tell you to do?”** Back in John chapter 15, Jesus will say, **“I am the vine you, are the branches. Whoever abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”** Jesus lays it out! He says, “Hey, if you want your life to be full of fruit, you have to abide in Me! You have to sit with Me! You have to allow Me to have a relationship with you, to walk alongside you.” We have to be prayerful to say, “God I want you in my life, Jesus I want You

in my life. I accept you as my Lord and Savior. I Repent of my sins, and now I want to do the things that you've called me to do."

And if the this whole time you're thinking, "Okay, I get it, I want to do what God called me to do, but what's up with this idea of fruit?" It's from Galatians chapter 5 in verses 22 and 23. It says this, **"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law."** So I want you to think about this just for a moment: Your life, again, want you to think about. Is it full of love, and joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? Because so many times our lives can be full of business, and anger, and just going to whatever is a quick fix for us, or a groggy attitude, right? Like, we walk around and we complain about each and everything that we can complain about, and yet Scripture says our life, because of our relationship with Jesus, which bears fruit, should be full of love, of joy, of peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This is the mark of a Christian. This is what should mark us. This is what should define who we are, that because of our relationship with Jesus, we are these types of people. Our lives are full of love, and joy, peace, and patience, kindness and goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Your relationship with Jesus should be an outpour of these things into your life. These things should be evidence of your relationship with Jesus. It should cause you to do these things!

Point #4: We learn that a fruitful life, causes you to serve the least of these

Jesus, in Matthew chapter 25, go back with me here, Matthew chapter 25, in verse 40, He'll again have some sobering Words. He'll talk about the ones who didn't do these things for the least of these, who didn't have the fruit in their lives. It says in verse 40, **"The King will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of the these, my brothers, you did it to me.'" And then, He'll go on to say, "The ones that you did not do to the least of these, you did not do to me."** A fruitful life should cause you to serve the least of these, because serving the least of these is serving Jesus! James, chapter 1 verse 27, says, **"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows, those in their afflictions, to keep oneself unstained from the world."** So James is literally saying, "Hey, listen if you say that you love Jesus, you say that you are a religious person, you have this religion, you have this faith to follow Jesus, you better be putting it into action!

Application

So, you might be saying throughout this sermon series, "Okay I understand what you're saying, Josh, I've heard this before. I get it. I'm a believer, I love Jesus, I want to put this into my life, what does that look like specifically when it comes to the foster care system? I told you earlier that I don't want to motivate you out of guilt. I think that guilt is a really bad motivator. It can motivate us for a little while, but not for a long journey. I shared earlier, also, that I lost quite a bit of weight earlier this year. What I didn't tell you is that I yo-yoed a lot before this. In the years leading up to this I would gain 20 pounds, lose 40 pounds, gain 60 pounds, I mean I really yo-yoed quite a bit. That's really unhealthy for us to do, and what eventually cause me to lose the weight is to say, "God gave me this body and I need to steward it well." It's God's truth. And in the same way, I want to motivate you. Not out of guilt to go out to do what God has called

you to do, but motivate you out of God's Truth. I think that, as believers, it should be the ultimate motivation for us to say, "This is what God's Word tells me to do," and so as a child, as Jesus says, to receive the Kingdom of God like a child, that's what we're to do and if we don't, then we can't receive the kingdom of God. That's what I think that we should do, is just to receive His truth and say, "Okay, I don't really get it, but this is what you said God, and I'm going to do it, just as a child holds on to their mother or father's hand as they cross the street. I don't really get it, but okay dad, if you say this is safe, I'll do it.

I hope that these things should be motivating to you, and so I want to read just a few statistics as well, that this is God's truth, and I want to give you the reality of the world that we live in today, specifically in the United States, when it comes to foster care. I want to read just a few statistics for you, and again I don't want to motivate you out of guilt, I want to motivate you out of God's Truth and I hope that throughout this sermon series that you have been motivated out of God's truth and not guilt, and I want to give you God's Truth within the reality of our environment which is the fact that there are a lot of foster kids that need your help.

Statistics on foster care

In fact, in our country today, the United States, there are 369,000 children in foster care. I want that number just to sink in for just a moment. 369,000 children that don't have a safe place to call home. 369,000 children. That means there are thousands of children within your community who need you to open up your home to say, "This is a safe environment. This is not only a safe and loving home, but also one that loves Jesus and can show you the way of Jesus and how to follow Him and how to be saved."

A huge need is also sibling groups. About 65% of sibling groups (and the statistics are a little bit difficult just because the foster care system is divided within the states and so this is just kind of an estimate but), about 65% of sibling groups will be separated at some point within the foster care system. So if a kid enters with his brother or his sister, there's a 65% chance that those siblings will be separated. I want you to think about that just for a moment, that not only is a child put through trauma to be put into the foster care system, but then once they are, the trauma is just kind of scooped on again and again as they get separated, and as they get bounced from home to home.

In fact, more than one-third of children will experience three or more placements per year. I want you to think about that just for a moment. Not only are they separated from their siblings, but also they have to bounce from house, to house, to house. Think about the feeling that, that child feels. That no one likes them. No one loves them. They can't handle them, so you know what, you're just going to have to go on to another house. I want you to think about now the way that God views that child. And as we talked about in the first message in this sermon series, God views that child as someone who He wants a relationship with, who's worth His time, who's worth teaching, who's worth dying for, who's worth having at His table and that child is worth them having a at your table as well, within your house.

I've asked you several times throughout this series to just be prayerful to ask God if that's something that He would have for you, to open up your home to foster children, and if that's the case, please be faithful with that. Please be faithful with that.

I want to just give you a couple of statistics as well for the outcome of children within the foster care system, and again the stats are a little bit difficult to find, and they vary a little bit, but this is what I found: between 1 in 4 and 1 in 3 of youth and young adults who experience homelessness, had a history in the foster care system. So, among young people who are homeless, between one out of every three, and one out of every four of those people had one time been in the foster care system. They've probably bounced from home to home and may have never seen a functional home. Again, you have that opportunity, to show what a functional home looks like. To show them what it looks like to have love, and joy, and peace, and patience, and kindness, and goodness, and faithfulness, and gentleness, and self-control, within their own home. They may have never experienced someone with those qualities and yet they could if they were in your home.

Here's another sobering statistic I want to give to you. In 2020 there was a survey of the children who ran away from the care of social services and were reported to the center for missing and exploited children. Of those children, an estimated 19% of them were likely victims of child sex trafficking.

Again, a sobering statistic, that we shouldn't be motivated again, not by guilt but by what God's Word says, and what does God's Word say? That we should have a relationship with Jesus, and out of that relationship with Jesus there should come action steps. I'm giving you an action step right here, and right now, which is to become a foster parent. And I know it's not always easy and even after you become a foster parent there's difficulties. There's relational strife. There's really difficult times that you might go through, but I want to simply motivate you by reading a couple of verses that we read earlier from Matthew chapter 25.

Ending

Jesus, right at the beginning of this chunk of Scripture that we read earlier, remember what Jesus said, He said, "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 from one another, as shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And He will place the sheep on His right, and the goats on his left."

My first question for you is this: what side of Jesus will you be found on? Jesus said as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, so God will separate those who truly have a relationship with Him, from those who don't. The evidence of your relationship with Jesus is going out and doing what God wants you to do, and if that's becoming a foster parent, we're here for you and we have action steps for you to take. Jesus, He gave you things to do. He created you with a purpose. He loves you, and He created you with good things in mind.

Ephesians 2:10 says, **“We are His workmanship.”** You're important. He created you, as a workman creates his loving design. I love building things, especially out of wood. I just love creating things, and there's nothing more special than, I think, out of creating things than creating something out of your own imagination, and then just being able to use it or look at it and you're just like, “Man that is so good.” Especially if you can use it how it was intended to be used, and Jesus, He looks at you, and he says, “You're My workmanship. I've created you with a purpose. I've created you with good works in mind, as Ephesians chapter 2:10 says, **‘prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.’**”

Let me ask you a question: are you walking in the things that God wants you to do? Here's my other question for you: as you think about Matthew chapter 25, and God separating those who truly love him from those who don't have a saving relationship with Him, there are people in your community, specifically kids in the foster care system, who don't know Jesus and who need to be told about who He is. Remember, God looks at them as someone who He says they're *entitled* to my love, not because of anything they've done, but because of who I am, God says, “I love you and I've created you with a purpose, and I want to have a relationship with you.” God looks at those people that way. We should as well. We should look at those people to say, “I would love to give you an opportunity to show you how to love Jesus, to be that person in your life, to model love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. My question for you is: what side of Jesus are you on?”

Closing Prayer

Let me pray for you. Father, we thank you so much again for your good and Your perfect Word, and I pray for all of us, as we've journeyed through these passages of Scripture together, that we wouldn't take them lightly, that we would truly take them to heart, that we would be people full of your fruit... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, and that we would be the type of people to not only accept those things in our life, but also to let them transform us to serve you and to reach out to other people, so that they could do the same. God, if you're calling us to be involved in the foster care system in any way, God would you help us to be faithful in that. Jesus, we love you so much. Thank you for going on the cross. Thank you for dying for our sins, and as You've put these things before us, would you motivate us not out of guilt, but out of your Word... out of the Truth found in Your Word, that we would be people who bear much fruit. Thank you so much for everything you've done for us, Father, and we pray this all in Jesus Name, amen.