

Holy Textures

Meeting Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
Short, easy to use, faith-provoking insights.

Matthew 25:31-46

The judgement is NOT based on doing the right things to/for Jesus. Of course we would do all those things if we knew it was Jesus. (Wouldn't we?) But unfortunately, the judgement is based on just doing the right things for the dispossessed. This is not rocket science; it only requires common sense and human decency. And we all have that don't we?

Year A

Pentecost 23

Reign of Christ or Christ the King

November 20, 2011

Sunday Between November 20 and November 26 Inclusive

Proper 29, Ordinary Time 34

USA Thanksgiving is fourth Thursday, November 22 - 28. May be celebrated Sunday between November 18 and November 24 inclusive. See [Luke 17:11-19](#) for Thanksgiving commentary.

Read the passage at the bottom of this post: [Matthew 25:31-46, The Message](#) or [Matthew 25:31-46, The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

Click here, [Matthew 25:31-46](#), for an easy to print or email Adobe PDF version of this note.

Sermon by the [Rev. Dr. George Hermanson](#), "[On Not Judging](#)."

Wow. Here we are at the end of Year A. And one of my favourite passages too.

Chapters 24 and 25 of Matthew are considered by scholars to be the last of 5 "discourses" (i.e., long sections of teachings by Jesus). It is hypothesized that these 5 sections are intended by Matthew to be a new Torah - a new set of 5 "books" paralleling the 5 books of the Torah attributed to Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

The implication of this for present day understanding is that this final section has been significantly edited by Matthew to fit his intentions.

The themes of chapters 24 and 25 are: final judgment and the return of the Son of Man, or, the establishing of the reign of God on earth; and teachings about delays.

These two issues were certainly of high concern to Matthew and his community. Scholars debate how much they were top-of-mind for Jesus. Thus the scholarly debate about how much Matthew used - and changed - anything Jesus might have actually said to address concerns that arose only after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension.

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We have just heard (Matthew 25:14-30) a parable about the present age where the honourable slave who doesn't use his masters wealth to steal even more from the poor, but instead buries it and returns it in full, is punished and "thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Jesus continues by telling what it will be like when the promised "new age" comes.

Note in **Verse 31**, that the Son of Man "comes in his glory," that is, with all the proper public honour and recognition that is due; unlike the present age where "the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified." (Matthew 26:2)

And when the Son of Man comes in his glory, there will be a judgement-punishment that will reverse the judgement-punishments of this present age. Whereas, in the previous parable of this present age, it was the honourable slave who was punished, in the age to come, it is the honourable who will be rewarded and the dishonourable who will be punished.

Note that the criteria used for separating the honourable from the dishonourable all have to do with how the wealthy and privileged respond to the needs of the dispossessed.

What I love about this parable is that **BOTH** those judged to be honourable and those judged to be dishonourable have exactly the same response:

Lord, when was it we saw you hungry ...?

In other words, the judgement is **NOT** based on doing the right things to/for Jesus. Of course we would do all those things if we knew it was Jesus. (Wouldn't we?)

But unfortunately, the judgement is based on just doing the right things for the dispossessed. This is not rocket science; it only requires common sense and human decency. And we all have that don't we?

Did I say this was my favourite passage? Yikes. I sincerely hope that Paul got it right and we are saved by God's grace and not by good deeds.

David Ewart,
www.holytextures.com

Historical background information in this post is drawn primarily from Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels, see link below, pages 125-126.

* [Link to Amazon.com Bibliography for Bruce Malina, et. al.](#), Social Science Commentary on ... The Synoptic Gospels; The Gospel of John; The Book of Acts; The Letters of Paul; The Book of Revelation; and others.

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Matthew 25:31-46 (NRSV)

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³ and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' ⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' ⁴¹ Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

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Matthew 25:31-46 (The Message)

³¹ "When he finally arrives, blazing in beauty and all his angels with him, the Son of Man will take his place on his glorious throne. ³² Then all the nations will be arranged before him and he will sort the people out, much as a shepherd sorts out sheep and goats, ³³ putting sheep to his right and goats to his left.

³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what's coming to you in this kingdom. It's been ready for you since the world's foundation. ³⁵ And here's why:

I was hungry and you fed me,
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,
I was homeless and you gave me a room,
³⁶ I was shivering and you gave me clothes,
I was sick and you stopped to visit,
I was in prison and you came to me.'

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³⁷ "Then those 'sheep' are going to say, 'Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? ³⁸⁻³⁹ And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?' ⁴⁰ Then the King will say, 'I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.'

⁴¹ "Then he will turn to the 'goats,' the ones on his left, and say, 'Get out, worthless goats! You're good for nothing but the fires of hell. ⁴² And why? Because—

I was hungry and you gave me no meal,
I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,
⁴³ I was homeless and you gave me no bed,
I was shivering and you gave me no clothes,
Sick and in prison, and you never visited.'

⁴⁴ "Then those 'goats' are going to say, 'Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or homeless or shivering or sick or in prison and didn't help?'

⁴⁵ "He will answer them, 'I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you failed to do one of these things to someone who was being overlooked or ignored, that was me—you failed to do it to me.'

⁴⁶ "Then those 'goats' will be herded to their eternal doom, but the 'sheep' to their eternal reward."

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