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Series- Putting Feet To Faith:

Becoming a Matthew 25 Church

Part 2- “A Word to the Sheep”

Matthew 25:31-34

Universalism is an insidious heresy. It says that God is such a loving deity that God would never send any person to eternal punishment. Universalism says that everybody (the universe) will go to heaven if there is a heaven. It teaches that the death of Christ, the atonement, is universally applied. Christ died for all and all are forgiven and acceptable to God.

Scholar Michael McClymond has written a book titled,

*The Devil’s Redemption: A New History and Interpretation of Christian Universalism.* In an interview that appeared in Christianity Today (March 2019), McClymond said,

*Universalism isn’t just a theological mistake. It’s also a symptom of deeper problems. In a culture characterized by moralistic therapeutic deism, universalism fits the age we inhabit. As I argue in the book, universalism is the opiate of the theologians. It’s the way we would want the world to be. Some imagine that a more loving and less judgmental church would be better positioned to win new adherents. Yet perfect love appeared in history—and he was crucified.*

When we read this text in Matthew 25, it would be very tempting to see it as an invitation to be a good person. In so becoming, the person earns the commendation of Jesus. This is, for some, a call to be a good humanitarian. However, the larger context clearly shows this passage to be a word from our Lord, to His disciples (24:1, 3), about the *how* of living out their faith. This is word not proclaimed to everybody. This is a word to Christ’s people.

Jesus speaks of a future event of judgement (v.31). At that event, everyone will not be treated equally. There will be a word for the sheep, the right-hand people of God. There will also be a word for the goats, the left-hand people.

Let’s look at what our Lord will say to His people. As we look at it, I want to think about how we can be a Matthew 25 faith community. I want to unpack verse 34 and suggest three celebrations for the sheep. A fair question would be “When will this judgment take place?” Most commentators believe it will be after the Tribulation period and before the 1000-year reign of Christ, called the Millennial.

1. Come

Don’t miss that small word. It is an invitation from The Eternal, who bids those who are sometimes afar off, to *come.* The Lord of the Church is the commissioning Lord who bids, alternately, to *come* and *go.* Matthew 11:28

*Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

At the end of this gospel, Jesus tells His followers to

*Go, therefore and make disciples of the nations...*

Come and go.

Come, you blessed of My Father.

**The people best qualified to speak *for* Jesus are the people who have been evidently *with* Jesus. Come!**

A Matthew 25 church is an aggregate of people who have heard Jesus’ invitation to “Come, partner with Me.”

The most blessed people on the planet are those who have heard and responded to the invitation of The Eternal. Come, you blessed of My Father. I celebrate Jesus’ invitation to His own, His sheep.

2. Inherit

There is, for the sheep of God, an inheritance.

**Q**: Of what does the inheritance consist?

**A:** A kingdom

Let’s define *the kingdom* as that sphere in which God reigns. He invites His sheep to inherit the kingdom. The kingdom is for the saved, the people who, through repentance and faith, have become God’s sheep. The sheep are in a relationship with the Shepherd-King. The sheep do their kingdom work as citizens of their Father’s kingdom.

We give ourselves to what Dr. Tony Evans calls “a kingdom agenda”. We live and serve in such a way as to reflect the values and the mandates of the King.

**Illus.**

For some years of his young life, our son bemoaned the fact that he is an only child. He wanted siblings. I told him that was *not* happening. One day I said to him, “Let me give you another way to look at being an only child. When Mom and I go home to be with the Lord, everything, and I mean everything, we have is yours. The car I will be driving at the time of death; the money that is in the bank and our investment portfolio; the house in which we’re living at the time- EVERYTHING is yours.” I wanted to remind my child that there is an inheritance which he may claim. So it is with God’s sheep.

Luke 12:32

*Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

I celebrate the inheritance our Father has for us, His sheep.

3. Before the foundation of the world.

The kingdom has been planned, foreordained. *God* saw it before *we* will see it. As we do Matthew 25 work in the world, we do it reminding ourselves that God has a *plan* for us. We are not improvising as we go. We are following The Plan. This is a word to the elect of God. Before the world was formed, God knew us and had a plan for us.

A Matthew 25 church is not merely a group of people that feeds the hungry, gives water to the thirsty, takes in the stranger, clothes the naked, visits the sick, ministers to the incarcerated. No, we carry out a kingdom manifesto. We, the sheep of God, conduct ourselves in the world, in our culture, as if the Father has given us the keys and put us in charge...Oh, wait. He has!!! There is no commissioning like this for the goats. These are words for the sheep.

*For Thine is the kingdom*

*and the power*

*and the glory*

*forever.*

Amen