

# The Work Of The King

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Good morning. Our reading today is from Matthew chapter 25 verses 31 to 46. When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, come you who are blessed by my father, take your inheritance. The kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you something to drink?

When did we see you a stranger and invite you in or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go visit you? The king will reply, truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. Then he will say to those on his left, depart from me, you who are cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger and you did not invite me in. I needed clothes and you did not clothe me.

I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me. They also will answer, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison and did not help you?

[ 2 : 0 3 ] He will reply, truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. So let's pray together. Almighty God, thank you for the gift that is this morning.

Thank you for the gift that is this church family. And as we come today, having opened ourselves in praise, singing to you, praying to you, and hearing your word, Lord, move in each of us in a fresh way.

Give us what you know we need to go out into the world and reflect your light into worlds that are so dark and need it so desperately. In Jesus' name we pray and ask.

Amen. So Christ the King Sunday. And we're talking about doing the work of the King today.

[ 3 : 0 6 ] Doing the work of the King. Now, to help us understand why this is a thing, it's because most of us, I'm going to assume most of us, have chosen to be disciples of Jesus.

And because we've made that choice, we have to start thinking about what it means to actually honor that choice and do the work of the King.

Now, if you're kind of confused on why that matters, let me give you an example. So here's what most of you have been waiting for. Where are my fans at?

Where are my Bills fans at? You tell me. I'm looking to all of you because I know there's a few of you. And most of you are not that shy until I ask questions like this.

However, what is it that makes you a fan? What is it that makes you a fan? You lift them up in prayer as you just did.

[ 4 : 12 ] Right? What else do you do that makes you a fan? Say again? Because I'm from the town they represent. Okay? What else? They give us hope.

They give us hope. Okay. I heard a few. Go ahead. They've been through the heart attacks. They're ready for the good time. All right. So stuck with them even when the thing wasn't great.

So we stick with them. What else? Loyalty. Loyalty. Okay. What does that look like? I'm with you, Randy. But what does that loyalty look like? You wear the gear.

You wear the gear. As we can see. You wear that gear no matter where you were. Like if you were in Dallas or in Philadelphia today. You'd wear that gear.

Right? Because it means that much to you. And this is what I want to get at. See, because when you have this attachment. When there is something in your life that you value to this degree.

[ 5 : 12 ] You care about what happens. And you show the world that it matters to you. And that's what we're talking about. And it's easy to do with sports teams.

We see people do it. We see how passionate people can be. We see how brave some people can be. As we wear gear for other teams.

Even in different towns. Right, Shane? And that's what we do. But that's what I want us to think about today. Because while we can certainly understand it for those of us who are loyal to sports teams.

We understand it there. But have you ever applied that to your work as a disciple? That same degree of passion.

That same degree of making sure the world knows. That same degree of your behavior shows that you're on the team. Because that's what we need to pay attention to today.

[ 6 : 19 ] Because it seems easy enough. Right? And for the fans that are loyal fans. The ones who wear their gear no matter where they are. The ones who leap off cars onto tables.

The ones who paint their faces. All that kind of stuff. When you encounter somebody who's got on the t-shirt. And you're all ready to have that experience. And you realize this person really is in the fan. It's like somebody's cousin gave them that t-shirt when they were in town.

And it really doesn't matter to them. Right? But here's what we're trying to bring out. Because, again, on the one hand, you've got the folks who are all in.

The folks who are completely connected. The folks whose behavior shows that this matters to them. And then you have those surface folks.

Those folks who may have the t-shirt but really aren't on the team. That matters in faith.

[ 7 : 24 ] And that's today's lesson. You see, when we talk about this idea of Jesus as our king. As I said during our greeting time.

You know, in our culture, kings don't really fare that well. Especially in this culture. Because we are very proud of our independence. We are very proud of our sense of get it done yourself.

We are proud of our sense of being free from other types of authority. That's who we pride ourselves as being. And yet, this relationship we're in with Christ is all about who's the king.

And what it means to have one. And if we don't get that right, we're not really in the relationship we think we're supposed to be in. Because part of this is we've got to remember that Jesus loves us.

Jesus walks with us as friends. Jesus walks with us as brother. But let's not forget, Jesus is in fact king. With all that implies.

[ 8 : 38 ] With all that comes with the office. And we get so used to the casual, loving thing in our relationship that we forget that dimension of who he is sometimes.

And especially what that means when Jesus says things like, I give you a new commandment. See, when you're the king, you get to say stuff like that.

And mean it. And not only mean it, but expect people to do it. Remember, Jesus himself said, Why do you call me Lord and then not do what I say?

That's what this is about. So how do we get to that place where the world doesn't see us as casual fans?

In fact, the world shouldn't see us as fans at all. Because this is a different kind of relationship than being a fan. There's a great book by a pastor named Kyle Eidelman.

[ 9 : 46 ] It's called Not a Fan. See, when you're a fan of somebody, that you watch them kind of do their thing and then you sit back and applaud because you like what they've done.

I hope you're closer to Jesus than that. I hope Jesus means more to you than, say, your favorite band. And yes, maybe even your favorite sports team.

Because we're in a different kind of relationship here. And when we're in that relationship, we should be doing the things that show this relationship matters.

And Jesus has told us that. See, so many folks that we interact with say, well, I want to be sure that I get it right. I want to be sure that I'm making God happy. I want to do the things that I know will bring joy to God's heart.

How do I know that? I wish I could figure that out. And the thing is, Jesus has told us time and time and time again. The question is, will we actually do what our king has told us to do?

[ 10 : 57 ] I mean, you heard it. You heard it fresh this morning. And let me read it for you again in case it didn't hit the way it's supposed to.

Because remember, in this section of the gospel, what Jesus has been doing is preparing his disciples for the time that he's not walking with them in the flesh the same way. And so, we get to this one.

And so, if you want to follow along, this is Matthew 25. I'm going to read verses 31 through 36. When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne.

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.

He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father.

[ 12 : 06 ] Take your inheritance. The kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. See, here's the thing.

Jesus has shown you what it means to wear the crown. He gets to sit on that throne because of who he is. He has loved us like that.

That's who he is. But then he reminds us that as his people, this is what it looks like to follow me.

And he gives us very concrete examples. I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.

I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison. You came to me. I was in prison. I was in prison.

[ 13 : 34 ] The challenge for all of us is, how well are we doing those things? How easy does it flow from you? Is your love for your king and for your siblings that great?

See, it's very telling, right? Because we know what our challenge is with this. Because our challenge is, we are very clear about how far we want our love to go.

That we will love until it gets to a certain point. And when it starts to get inconvenient, or when it starts to get hard, we tend not to love like we're supposed to.

Let's just be real about that. Whereas Jesus doesn't put conditions on it. And that's our rub, isn't it? You know, we love the people it's easy to love.

We are real happy to give as long as giving doesn't hurt us some way. As long as we don't have to dig too deep.

[ 14 : 53 ] And that's where we find ourselves struggling. You know, it gets even harder than that. Because in this next verse is something very telling.

So Jesus has just said this. And so in verse 37, he says this. Then the righteous will answer him. Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink?

When did we see you a stranger and invite you in? Or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The king will reply.

Truly I tell you. Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine. You did for me. See, and that's where we get exposed.

We get exposed because what Jesus calls out is the fact that, yeah, I know that if it was me, like if I showed up, knocked on your door, you saw it was me, you'd invite me in.

[ 15 : 51 ] If you saw me and knew I was hungry. Yeah, you'd have given me something. But then Jesus pushes us to what he teaches us in a different part of the gospel.

Because what he says is, look, if you only love the people who love you, why is that special? Everybody does that. But it takes something else to love the people who are hard to love.

It takes something else to be loved when it's inconvenient. When the rest of the world is saying, be angry. When the rest of the world says, hit back.

When the rest of the world says, get as much as you can. When the rest of the world says, hold this and hold it tight. Jesus is saying, no, that's not who we're supposed to be.

And when you forget that, remember, how has he treated you? Did he hit back?

[ 16 : 59 ] Did he walk away? Did he hold back when you asked? Because that's not who he is.

And that's our trouble. Because it's easy for us to get out here in this world and then look just like this world.

When our king has been telling us something very specific. When our king has been telling us something very clear. We just haven't owned it the way he needs us to.

So that's where we have to take a step. That's where we have to get better.

And so how do we do that? You see, the key for us is to remember that the great thing about this king, unlike many of the kings we've seen in history, the great thing about this king is that he actually listens to you.

[ 18 : 22 ] That if you call him, he responds. And if you want to take a step further into the path or further along the road that he has set before you, ask him for help.

It starts there. Simply ask him to show you your next step. Lord, what is it you need me to do differently?

Where is the place in me that you need me to look at? What is this thing that you say is my next change? Reach out for him.

Ask him purposefully. He will not disappoint you. The answer will be hard. The answer will not feel good.

You know why? Because if you could have done it already, you'd have already done it. If it was easy to do, it'd already be done. That doesn't mean it's not the answer.

[ 19 : 34 ] And the only way you get there is with his help. But that's the key. He's ready to do that.

You just have to seek it. And one of the ways you can do that is to simply listen to what he said do. Where in your life could you choose differently?

Where in your life could you make the time to give a little bit more? To call that friend you've been meaning to. To actually give some time to support something that matters to you.

See, the thing is, if we can let go of our desire to serve inconvenience, right?

That's two words, not one. Serve inconvenience. Meaning that we go when it's easy. We go when it works with everything else I want to do.

[ 20 : 45 ] We go when I can make it happen. As opposed to when it's uncomfortable. When I have to give up something that I don't really want to give up.

That's exactly what this is about. You see, the thing is, when Jesus shows us that king part of himself.

When Jesus reminds us that that is who he is. And we look that that day. It seems so far away and it feels like, oh yeah, that's out there.

But it doesn't feel real. But that day will come. That day will come when Jesus says, okay.

Who actually listened to me? Not just simply heard the words, but showed me that they understood it. Showed me that they loved me enough to do what I said do.

[ 21 : 53 ] Who treated me like I was in fact their king? As opposed to those casual fans. Remember, Jesus also says, not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, is getting in.

And he means those who wear the t-shirt, but don't get it. Let me show you a real world example. I want you to think back to earlier this week.

I want you to think about all of the time and energy you saw people invest in making sure that they had the perfect golden brown bird.

That they set a beautiful table. That the house was spotless. That everybody smiled and everybody did all the things and all of that.

And they planned a perfect Thanksgiving. Maybe one thing was missing. Like the idea of actually giving thanks.

[ 23 : 06 ] Where was that? Where was that? In all your planning? Where was that? In all of the work?

Where was that in that perfectly scheduled day? Did Jesus get any of that time and energy? Wearing the t-shirt.

But not actually caring about the game. This is what we're talking about. See, that's where we get pushed.

Friends, this is not hopeless. But we simply have to name this reality in order to get where we hope to go.

You see, the great thing about this king is while he has given us this work, while he has shown us who he is, he gives us chance after chance.

[ 24 : 13 ] He shows us grace after grace. He says, Let the world see that Jesus is transformational. That Jesus makes a very real difference. That your world isn't perfect. That, yeah, you still deal with things like serious illnesses and challenges and car troubles and furnaces that break and people on job you can't stand.

All that kind of stuff still happens in your world. Yet, your king is real. And you live accordingly.

That's who he is. And that's who he calls you to be. Join him in his work.

Amen. And amen. Loving God, we thank you that you are who you are. Lord, that you have moved in each of us to this degree.

[ 25 : 56 ] That we, people who are so prone to self, we are people who are so prone to independence. We are people who are so prone to fighting back.

That we have opened our hearts and declared with our mouths that you are our king. Lord, help us to make that real in how we move through each and every day.

Let the world see in us a love so real, so powerful, and so undeniable that it can only have come from you. The one true source of real love.

That when the world is hard, that when we encounter people who push back, that when we encounter the hostility and the hurt and the pain, that yes, we will feel certain things, but our response will always lead with love.

Let us be, indeed, your people, here, now, and always. Amen. Indeed, what a joy it is to know that our king will reign forever, and we along with him.

[ 27 : 13 ] So as you think of all the ways in which you can be about the work of the king this week, I want to highlight a few things for you. First, that we have, you heard Nancy mention about the Christmas concert coming next Saturday.

And so if you do want to order some cookie or bring some cookies with you, then make sure you grab one of those cards so we just have a sense of how much we will have. They're on a table in the back.

Make sure you let us know that. A pressing issue for today is if you would like to order Christmas poinsettias. That order needs to go in today. So if you haven't ordered them yet, you can still have a chance to get them online as well.

But please make sure that you submit those orders today. There are also cards in the back if you want to order those. The angel tree is up. We still have a couple more weeks. If you haven't grabbed your tags yet, please make sure you do.

And I want to remind folks that our Advent Bible study on almost Christmas will start this Thursday. So if you want to come to the morning session at 11 or the evening session at 7, or if you want to join us online during the evening session, that would be fine.

[ 28 : 20 ] But come on out this Thursday and we're going to have a great walk through what it means to believe in those four things we celebrate every weekend from a Wesleyan perspective. The hope, joy, peace, and love.

We'll be talking about each of those independently. So join us for that Bible study starting on Thursday. So now let's receive our benediction. Almighty God, you have given us this sacred and holy work.

Let us rise to the task of being your people and joining you and following you wherever you lead, however you call. Now in the name of God, our creator and king, Jesus Christ, our Lord and our savior.

And in the name of the Holy Spirit, our comforter and our sustainer. May God bless us as we leave to love and serve God and all God's children. Amen.