

Matthew 22-08-14b

Let's resume our study now. We are looking at Matthew 25 and Luke 19, the parable of the talents, vis-a-vis the parable of the minas, translated pounds in some versions. And we notice that the similarities are that there is someone in authority who has servants.

That person in authority is going on a journey and is going to return and gives an assignment with resources and accountability that will be measured at the certain return. Those are the similarities, but the differences tell us that Jesus probably told parables in varying forms and with changed details depending on the situation. In the context of what we call Passion Week, the run-up, this is just a few days before his arrest and trial and crucifixion, Jesus delivers the parable of the talents.

It is earlier, it is after visiting Zacchaeus. It is in traveling toward Jerusalem, but not having arrived yet, that the parable of the minas is given. And with the specific idea of coming to Jerusalem and the expectation that it's going to be kingdom now.

I want to talk just a moment about the kingdom now idea before we finish our analysis. This won't take long, but I feel it is important to be aware that the liberal co-opting and hijacking of traditional Christian faith is ongoing. You will remember years ago, we looked at progressive dispensationalism, where understanding God's program for Israel and God's program for the church was and has been a foundation for advanced Bible interpretation, going beyond the simple basic life skills and beginning to enter into God's larger plan, God's kingdoms to come.

Why is there a millennial kingdom? Why is there a kingdom of the Father? What is it to fulfill the Old Testament promises to Israel? What is it to fulfill all promises in the ultimate sense to Israel and to the church? What is the situation, role, function, and embodiment of Old Testament Israel in the millennial kingdom? What is the role and function and embodiment of the church at and after the rapture? These questions are answerable by discerning passages that are talking about Israel, national Israel, and God's literal fulfillment of His promises to them, and the church, which was not understood or seen in Old Testament days. Paul's stewardship of the mysteries is an important element of New Testament revelation. To understand the book of Revelation, you have to understand what does and does not pertain to the 70th week of Daniel, the last seven years of the age of Israel.

We have seen how helpful it is to recognize that before trying to figure out who are the white-robed multitudes, who are the souls under the altar, who are the 144,000, what is observation, interpretation, and application? It is so important to understand dispensations. Progressive dispensationalism with a social conscience and a desire to heal a perceived breach between covenant theology and dispensational theology, coming at it from a let's heal and become unified and bind together, decided to find a

way to reconcile the two very diverse understandings of God's plan and program and its foundation. Is it founded on covenants, some of which have to be invented from whole cloth, or is it founded on different phases of God's plan that we call dispensations? In the interest of trying to achieve unity, it was called, well, we're making progress, this theological difference.

In some cases, it resulted in bitterness and even hostility and feuds between theologians and between theological schools, which is always wrong. If somebody has a different understanding, if they ask you why you understand it as you do, you explain it. They don't care for that.

They are not persuaded by it. It is time to say, go, be warmed, be fed. To attack, to vilify, to undermine, to mount a crusade against somebody with a different persuasion, you are an unprofitable servant.

You are sowing the seeds of discord. You are beating the fellow servants. You're trying to eat out of the larder at your own expense and pursue your own agenda.

The Bible teaches that that is wrong. You can't fix everybody. You can't simply say, if you understood what I understood, you would think what I think and believe what I believe.

It is just not true. I saw a cartoon this past week that illustrates this truth. There is a number painted on the sidewalk, and there's a person standing to the left and a person standing to the right.

The person on the left says nine. The person on the right says six. They're looking at the very same shape on the ground, but viewed from the right, it's one number.

Viewed from the left, it's another, and it's the very same number. Spending your time saying, don't you see this curved tail? Don't you see this loop? It's not a letter P. It curves. This is just most emphatically a nine.

I'm sorry, no. Don't you see how the tail, this is a six. Looking at the very same thing, explaining to somebody fully what you see will not persuade, convince, or unless someone is genuinely interested and seeking.

This is why God says, how many times have you heard me quote it, you will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. Seek me, find me when you search for me. It's not about ascertaining the one and only correct interpretation of a passage of scripture.

It is about going to the truth of God's word to get to God. John 14.6, right? Jesus is not just a way. He is the way.

And where does that way lead? To the father. Not to Jesus himself, to the father. You

arrive at the father through Christ.

Well, that was progressive dispensationalism, and it threw up clouds of dust and muddied water and was a harbinger, was part of the point of the spear for progressive Christianity in general. Progressive dispensationalism has now become a part of progressive Christianity. And progressive Christianity is another gospel.

It is the social gospel wrapped up in new terminology. Anytime people want to push something old as new, they just change its name. And you've heard all kinds of terms redefined in the modern day.

But there is a statement on social justice that has been adopted by conservative Christians in the face of this progressive notion. So what does progressive Christianity believe? They've summarized it in eight points. You can find this on progressivechristianity.org. I'm sorry to dredge this up, but it pertains, and you'll see why in just a moment.

Let me just summarize this briefly. By calling ourselves progressive Christians, we mean that we are Christians who, one, believe that following the path and teachings of Jesus can lead to an awareness and experience of the sacred and the oneness and unity of all life. This is why people, Christians, our fellow believers who are going down the progressive Christianity road, you will find that they are often fans of environmentalism, Green New Deal, get off of fossil fuels, and so on.

Be aware, there's nothing inherently wrong with sensitivity to not damaging the environment, being good stewards of what God puts under our control. But the awareness and experience of the sacred and the oneness and unity of all life. Many of these folks will end up becoming vegans because all life means all life, all animal life at least.

They're not too concerned about the plants. Number two, affirm that the teachings of Jesus provide but one of many ways to experience the sacredness and oneness of life. Jesus is one of many ascended spirit masters, if you will.

And we can draw from diverse sources of wisdom in our spiritual journey. This is why progressive Christianity will quote copiously from what I like to call aphorismal philosophy, sound bites from philosophers who want to repackage, reconstitute the word of God in their own words. And this is the new scripture.

And the difference between a great juicy chicken thigh and a chicken McNugget, a chicken McNugget is reconstituted, and you don't want to see what got thrown into the machine before it became that paste that they formed into a lump and then breaded so you couldn't see the bubbles in it. It is not the same. It may have some of the same sources, but if you knew everything that went into a chicken McNugget, you'd never eat

one again.

Same with this. There are diversities of thought, and I can say it better, and I can eliminate what I don't like out of scripture, and I'll put it in a pithy quote and a bumper sticker size message, and this is now what I live by. This is my truth.

This is the word. This is the logos that's going to define me and motivate me. So the teachings of Jesus provide, but one of many ways to experience the sacredness and oneness of life.

And we can draw from diverse sources of wisdom in our spiritual journey. Enemy love gets pressed into service that you should love everybody because of the imago Dei, the image of God. You will hear this over and over again.

Everyone is an image bearer. Everyone is image of God. Therefore, everyone is deserving of equal consideration, equal fellowship, equal love, equal help.

Everybody is equal. This is the sacredness and oneness, and it's justified by being made in the image of God. Newsflash.

You and I are broken. This is like saying the mirror reflects the image of God when the mirror is cracked and broken and there's a bunch of chunks and pieces missing. A broken mirror does not reflect the image of God.

There is only one mirror that reflects the image of God, and that's the Lord Jesus. He is the imago Dei. Man was originally made in God's image and after his likeness, but that is only said before the fall.

When sin entered and death by sin, death passed upon all men, all have sinned. And what you will find in progressive Christianity is, this is like, the loudest silence you've ever heard. This is the biggest emphasis on never mentioning sin.

Sin is no longer an issue. Sinfulness is not an issue. The problem of sin, the corruption of sin, the deleterious influence and effect of sin multiplying into evil disappears.

And, well, we'll overcome evil not with good, but with love. We'll just love the we'll just look at them as divine image bearers. And if we can just recruit them to get this love thing going, we won't have to worry about sin.

The reason Jesus died on the cross is to pay the penalty for sin and to break its power. And we cannot even begin to recover the image of God unless and until we are not only saved, but we are under the influence of the Spirit of God and the Word of God. That's the power of God.

And by the way, that is the image of God. We can only love as God loves when the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. How? Romans 5.5. How do we recover and express

and reflect the love of God? It is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Any unbeliever cannot recover, express, or reflect the love of God. A believer who is not led by the Spirit, walking by means of the Spirit, actively endeavoring to live in the power of the Word of God and to be transformed by the renewing of the mind is not going to have the love of God and the image of God. This is completely ignored.

3. We call ourselves progressive Christians, but we believe in the sacredness and oneness and unity of all life. We affirm the teachings of Jesus provide but one of many ways to experience sacredness and oneness. 3. We seek community that is inclusive of all, inclusive of all people, including but not limited to conventional Christians and questioning skeptics, believers in agnostics, women and men, those of all sexual orientations and gender identities, those of all classes and abilities.

We seek community that is inclusive. 4. Know that the way we behave toward one another is the fullest expression of what we believe. We are not turning anyone away.

It doesn't matter how perverted your lifestyle, how ingrained your rebellion and your sins of the high hand and your dismissal and disavowal of anything that relates or reminds you of God. It doesn't matter. We want to be inclusive.

We want to hug you close. 4. Know that the way we behave toward one another is the fullest expression of what we believe. Sorry, no.

That is the second great commandment. What is the first great commandment? What would you say is the fullest expression of what you believe? The fullest expression? Do you love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind? Having done that, the vertical piece, you can pursue implementation of the horizontal cross piece that you see behind me here of horizontal love, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. These people have just taken God right out of the equation.

The way we behave toward one another is the fullest expression of what we believe, the fullest. Not, am I looking to the master and his charge to me in his absence of what I should be doing with what he has given me? Am I a good and faithful servant? No, it's all about, well, you know, I'm a minor servant and there's nine other minor servants. How have I treated those nine servants? Did I invite them over for dinner? Did I ask them how their minor was faring and the talent servants? Is there any indication whatsoever that the master said anything about how they treated their fellow servant? Now, if they had been abusive or unkind or thieving or whatever, I think that would have come up at the judgment.

But the evaluation criteria is, I gave you a mission. It's between you and me. What did you do with what I gave you? Are you going to enter into my joy? Are you going to enter

into my administration and serve me further? It is the relationship between the Lord and the servant.

Where are these people's Matthew 25 and Luke 19 in their New Testament? Jesus delivered these parables. Where is his teaching in their paradigm? It disappears. It's gone.

And what is the context? These people are all about the kingdom. Kingdom now. We're kingdom people.

We're Jesus followers. We're living for the kingdom. What was the context in Luke 19? Expectation of the kingdom.

We're heading for Jerusalem. The kingdom is going to be here any moment. And Jesus says, my kingdom is not a kingdom of love.

My kingdom is a kingdom of faithfulness, service, and dedication to the wishes and the purposes of the master. And it's going to come up again when we see the ending of those who sent the delegation saying, we don't want this man to rule over us. So number five, find grace in the search for understanding and believe there is more value in questioning than in absolutes.

I don't want the truth of the word of God as much as I want the freedom to question everything. My questions are more valuable than the absolute truth of the word of God. What has replaced what? I am the authority.

Anything I disagree with, I'll question it. And my question is more valuable than any absolute answer that is on offer. I have the freedom to reject any absolute because my question outweighs it.

If I question it, my question's better. I don't see the foundation for this absolute truth and I reject anything that calls itself absolute. If I question it, my question defines the value.

Number six, strive for peace and justice among all people. Strive for peace and justice among all people. That's too complex to go into.

I think if you think about it and remember, there is divine justice. I look to God for justice. Vengeance is mine.

I will repay, saith the Lord. But I am not in the business of trying to straighten imbalanced scales. God has said that the poor will be with us always.

I can't fix every poor person's dilemma. Some people are deservedly poor. Some people are undeservedly poor.

Some people are deservedly rich. Some are undeservedly rich. I can't fix that.

What I can do is become the faithful servant that God will put in charge and then I can make sure that justice is done. There will come a time. This is preparation.

This is training. I can't be yanked out of the middle of Quantico and go command a battalion when I'm a second lieutenant and I'm in training. I am learning the things that will serve me later when I am in charge of something.

But if I know that I'm a student and I am learning and I need to practice in a small way with small challenges, be faithful in that which is least, there will come a time when I can implement justice and so on. Peace and justice. 7. Strive to protect and restore the integrity of our earth.

Earth, capital E. Strive to protect and restore the integrity of our earth. The earth and its forms are passing away according to the Bible. This place is going to melt with a fervent heat.

You cannot cleanse the earth that has been cursed by God. The earth is cursed and it groans waiting for the redemption of the sons of God. Read Romans 6, 7, and 8. Wonderful section.

The earth groans, creation groans, and it is waiting for our redemption. Redemption is accomplished by God. God holds the ticket.

God has the earnest. God has sealed us as His possession with His Holy Spirit. But until we are redeemed, the earth is under the curse of God.

You cannot reverse God's curse. You can endeavor to not add to it or be a part of it. We like to be a blessing and brighten the corner where we are.

I think being a litter bug is a bad thing. I think mindlessly and shamelessly trashing things and leaving them worse than you found them doesn't reflect good stewardship. When I am entrusted with something, I want to be a good steward.

If God comes and looks it over, He's not going to say, I really appreciate how you implemented my curse and just trashed everything in your area. I can be faithful in that which is least, and that is what I control. If I want to recycle, I recycle.

If I want to pick up and be a boy scout and leave a place better than I found it, I think that honors God. But I have no ambitions of protecting and restoring the integrity of planet earth. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, not mine.

My assignment from Him is not to protect and restore the integrity of the earth. He's given me my assignment. 8. Commit to a path of lifelong learning, compassion, and selfless love.

I can go with that on the condition that it is accomplished according to God's provision,

God's purpose, God's Holy Spirit, and God's Word. They think there are many ways. There is one way, and it is the revelation of truth.

Well, this is what happens when you don't understand that the kingdom is future, and it isn't going to happen until the king returns and sits on his throne in Jerusalem. That's just the first of two kingdoms. If you do not understand that, and you begin to think that, well, we'll just make a kingdom for ourselves right now, there is all kinds of problems.

There's a lot more I could read to you on that. One thing I would encourage you to do is, there is a wonderful refutation of this that is published online, and it is the statementonsocialjustice.com. And it is a very good addressing and countering of these ideas, explaining the difference. I would encourage you to read it.

It's way too long for me to cover. But statementonsocialjustice.com. That's as much as I'm going to say about that. I just want to give one example of what happens when we don't take Jesus' point.

His point is, if you're thinking about kingdom, and you're thinking about the king, here's what you should be thinking about. It is, there is an interim of time where there is no kingdom. There is no personal implementation of the master's authority during this period.

The servants have been entrusted with a specific task until the Lord's return. And it is not to create a kingdom so that when he comes back, it's already up and running. It is not to come up with your own idea of what would be a good task while the master is away.

It isn't even defined in these two parables by how you're treating one another. Jesus covered that in a different parable, the one that we saw at the end of Matthew 24. You remember it.

This aspect is emphasized twice in two different ways with two slightly different perspectives. And it is your personal responsibility to multiply what has been entrusted to you. What God has given us, we have a clear opportunity to make the most of it in anticipation of his return and an evaluation.

And this is in contradistinction as servants to those who are not servants. And as you continue the comparison here between 25 of Matthew and 19 of Luke, you will notice that we've already talked about those who are like the servant who either dug a hole and hid it in the ground or who wrapped it in a cloth and shoved it in his pocket. And he pulls it out and says, you know, I didn't do anything with it.

What is the same objection in both cases? I knew you are a hard man reaping where you have not sown, gathering where you have not scattered in verse 26 of Matthew 25. And in Luke 19, he says, I feared you, verse 21, because you are an austere man. And

austere is a transliteration.

That's the word in Greek is austere. And it comes from a root that means to be dry. And because something is dried up, it's harsh, it's rough, it's unbending, it's rigid, it's demanding.

It's not necessarily a bad thing. There's a time when you need to be firm. You need to be hard.

There's a time when you need sandpaper if you're going to smooth something out. Iron sharpens iron by taking material away and creating sparks and heat, right? As iron sharpens iron, a man sharpens the countenance of his friend. There's a time when even our disagreements and our arguments benefit us because we find out things said in heat that wouldn't be said in kindness.

And sometimes we need a rebuke. We need to hear the harsh and the hard. If you've ever wanted to scrub something and your brush is too soft, a cloth won't get it.

You need something firmer. You need something that is more unyielding that will remove what needs to be removed. You are austere.

You're dry and somewhat harsh. But in both cases, and this is so fascinating, of all of the possible objections, you're austere, you collect what you did not deposit, you reap what you did not sow. And this is an objection on the part of the servant in each case.

It's virtually identical. You collect the benefit from work that you did not do. Now, the example in both parables is, he gave resources for someone else to plant and reap, someone else to scatter and gather.

He has delegated it. And the servant says, you reap the benefits of work that you did not do. He doesn't talk about the fact that, I know you gave me this mina that is not mine.

The talent guy doesn't say, you gave me this talent. It is the master's, but the master says, I want you to do. But both servants find this to be harsh.

It's harsh. And I don't think it's right, is the implication that you gather what you've not scattered and you reap what you did not sow. You're getting a profit on the backs of others.

You're harsh, you're hard, you're austere, you're scleros. And they find fault with the program. Because this is the program in both parables, is the Lord and the eventual King, are they not reaping what they did not sow? They gave it to the servants.

The servants did the work. Jesus has another parable about the servants going out and working in the field all day, and then coming in and preparing the master's meal. And even after that, they should say, we're unprofitable servants.

We have only done what was asked. There are two elements of this objection to note. And again, I will refer to the example of the currently wildly growing influence of progressive Christianity in our culture.

And that is God's too harsh. And he's too demanding. He demands something from us.

And this notion that he would be exacting and demanding about it, I don't like that. I am not going to participate in a program where the authority is harsh and there are expectations from my work. I just want to love and not be judged.

I just want to love. I just want peace and harmony and unity. There is no element of peace.

There's no element of harmony. And there's no element of unity in these two parables of the Lord Jesus specifically directed at the expectation of the kingdom. It is not a kingdom of love.

The measure of the servants who will serve and function and be rulers in that future kingdom has nothing to do with love, acceptance, kindness, respecting the Imago Dei in someone else. They are measured and they are useful to the Master in the future by their faithfulness to their mission, their dedication to His purposes, and their shared joy at the result. None of the faithful servants object to the Master's program, to the Lord's having resources that He delegates, having them do the work.

And notice when the unfaithful servants say, you reap where you did not sow and you gather where you did not scatter and you collect where you did not deposit. That's the third one here in Luke. What is the example that we see before our eyes in the parable? Who is given the five talents that were made, plus the five original talents, plus the talent of the unfaithful servant? The most faithful servant ends up with 11 talents.

He doesn't hand them back to the Master and the Master hauls them off. That servant gets to keep them and reinvest them. The one that takes one mina and makes it 10, it doesn't say that the Master collected the minas.

The minas are off someplace else. They're not even in view. He says, you're going to rule 10 cities.

We're entering a whole new area of service, function, and kingdom living in the future. This is so important to understand. So at verse 22 of Luke 19, out of your own mouth, I will judge you wicked servant.

In both cases, Jesus says the unproductive servant is wicked. Before any analysis is given, the fact they did not follow instructions. I was in a class and someone nearly got thrown out because after repeated instructions to wear boots that cover your ankles, the guy showed up in sneakers.

And only because somebody else happened to have a wearable pair of boots, roughly the correct size, in his truck did this guy get to stay. After repeated instructions, he didn't follow them and he almost lost his entire investment in the course because it's not refundable just because he didn't follow instructions. It is so important to listen and respect the authority of the person giving those instructions.

Out of your own mouth, if you knew that I was an austere man collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow, why then did you not put my money in the bank? In both parables, what he should have done if he knew the master was looking for profit by proxy. This is profit by proxy, right? In the best construction. There's another view which I am somewhat partial to that says these servants judged their master and think that it's unfair and not right for whatever reason.

You're, and maybe it's unfair, maybe this is not what the master does, maybe it's what the master does do, but the servants don't understand it. They certainly don't appreciate it, they don't approve of it, and they don't want to participate in it. The servant is judging the master and is stating that judgment at his own judgment.

You can imagine people at the great white throne as they are about to be cast into the lake of fire saying this is so unfair. Why didn't you do this? Why didn't you do that? You failed in some way. You didn't make it clear enough to me.

If you had done this, if you had done that, it's going to be God's fault that they are being cast into the lake of fire. I am sure that Satan and the angels think it's God's fault. Why can't you just let us be? Why can't we have our own universe? Well, that's what God is demonstrating through human history.

Left to itself, there is grotesque, horrific pain, suffering, corruption, denigration, abuse. The evils proliferate and just become this egregious cancer that spreads and infects and metastasizes. It's just a malignancy in the universe.

God cannot leave it be. It's like the tumor saying, why do you have to cut me out? But they'll go into the flames of the lake of fire saying it's God's fault. That's what these servants do.

However you want to understand their objection, they think it's the master's fault. There's something wrong with you, oh master, oh king. Well, remember there were people who thought that in advance and sent a delegation saying we don't want this to rule over us.

They hate him. It doesn't say if it's justified or unjustified. It just says they hate him.

And why did you not then put my money on account? Even if you don't understand the program and you disagree with me, at least the good part would be if you don't want to be involved in supervising this investment, support those who will. Give the resources to

somebody who will. Let's say somebody had the gift of missions, but they just didn't want to be a missionary.

I'm too much in this world. I don't want to forsake all and follow Christ or whatever. But they say, you know what I could do is I could support somebody else who's going to be a missionary.

Let me at least do that. If I don't want to be personally charitable, I can support a charity who will do the work. If I don't work at a soup kitchen, I can send money to the soup kitchen.

I can at least give the resources under my control to someone who will do the mission. This servant is evil because he did not do it himself, nor did he enable anybody else to do it. The bankers could have done the master's work, and they are evil in both cases because you could have made this happen in another way.

If you found it distasteful yourself, there's another way. Support somebody else because you're still recognizing that the master's purpose and mission is paramount. And your level of involvement, maybe you don't want to get your hands dirty.

Well, give it to somebody else who is. They're doubly condemned because they do not do it themselves. Remember Jesus' condemnation on the Pharisees? You do not enter the kingdom, nor do you let anybody else go in.

You're doubly condemned. These servants are doubly condemned. And look at the outcome.

Take the minus, give it to him who has 10 minus. Verse 26, I say to you that to everyone who has will be given. Same thing in Matthew.

To him who has, more will be given. To him that has not, even what he has will be taken away. The trend and the pattern that you establish in this life is going to be amplified.

The consequences will be amplified in the next. Now, verse 27 in Luke, bring here those enemies of mine who did not want me to reign over them and slay before me, slaughter before me. You'll never hear progressive Christians, you'll never hear the Jesus enemy love now, folks, talk about this red ink passage.

Bring those who rejected me and slaughter them in my presence. Bring and slaughter. The servants are brought and judged first.

Those who rejected him, he doesn't start business by hunting down his enemies and slaying them. He judges his servants on what they were supposed to do while he was gone. That's first, and that sequence is important.

If you're dispensational, you understand why. If you're covenant, you don't. Bring those

who opposed way back when he left.

Slaughter them. It goes right back to Archelaus and three thousand people slain at the temple. Slain at the temple.

Do you think this was memorable? Do you think it stuck in people's minds? Do you think that it seemed harsh? You want to talk about austere. He isn't austere. When is he austere? Why is he harsh? Lack of faithfulness, lack of obedience, lack of goodness.

On those who are evil, on those who are wicked, there is austerity. Well, people don't like judgment, and so I don't want to work for a guy that's so judgy. I don't want to work for a Lord that has such high standards and is demanding of faithfulness and obedience.

I don't want to be a part of that. Well, you could have at least supported somebody who does want to be faithful and obedient and produce divine good and invest in eternity, but you didn't even do that. What is the analog in Matthew 25, back to our passage? After the parable of the talents, what comes next? Verse 31, when the Son of Man comes in his glory, all the holy angels with him, he will sit on the throne of his glory, all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one another as a shepherd divides sheep from the goats.

This is the equivalent, but is separated. This is dealing with the unbelievers, those who absolutely refuse to recognize the Lord Jesus at all. The judgment of unbelievers, it still follows sequentially, the judging of the servants in the parable of the talents.

This is the equivalent of those who rejected, we will not have this rule over us. And we're going to compare and contrast these delegation types who will not have the authority of the Lord Jesus, won't recognize it, won't bow to it, won't submit to it, and the criteria of the sheep and goats judgment. How did you treat me represented by the least of these my brethren? Your research question for next time, your research question for next Sunday is, I'm just going to give you a phrase to think about.

The least of these my brethren. The entire judgment hinges on the treatment of the least of these my brethren in the sheep and goats judgment. Ponder that, collect your thoughts about it, and we'll compare notes next time.

But I'll be interested in your thoughts. We'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the power of your word to transform our minds, to renew us, to cleanse us as no other formulations of philosophy or precept or morality or ethics can do.

We thank you for the presence and the power of your Holy Spirit and the combination of those two in our lives, in our hearts, in our souls, to enable us to live a supernatural life with supernatural wisdom and insight, supernatural opportunity, supernatural endurance, supernatural fruit that includes love and joy and peace and patience, endurance, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. We pray that as we

reflect on these passages of Scripture and these words from the lips of the Lord Jesus, that your Holy Spirit will minister them to our hearts, help us to see how they pertain specifically to the situations we find ourselves in today and tomorrow and the next day, so that we can be recipients of that evaluation, well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord, enter into opportunities for future service and function to implement your purposes in the overall plans and purposes that have begun in eternity past and will extend into eternity future. We thank you for your grace in including us and weaving us into the fabric of that plan, and we pray that you will help us to see our place, our purpose, and our immediate path in the days ahead.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.