

MCC of Northern Virginia
2021 Stewardship Campaign
We Are Workers Together

Out With The Old, In With The New

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Preaching

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First Reading ~ *from Matthew 25:31-46*

"At the appointed time the Promised One will come in glory, escorted by all the angels of heaven, and will sit upon the royal throne, with all the nations assembled below. Then the Promised One will separate them from one another, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. The sheep will be placed on the right hand, the goats on the left.

The ruler will say to those on the right, 'Come, you blessed of my Abba God! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world! For I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me; naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me; in prison and you came to visit me.' Then these just will ask 'When did we see you hungry and feed you, or see you thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you as a stranger and invite you in, or clothe you in your nakedness? When did we see you ill or in prison and come to visit you? The ruler will answer them, 'The truth is, every time you did this for the least of my sisters or brothers, you did it for me.'

Then the ruler will say to those on the left, 'Out of my sight, you accursed ones! Into that everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and the fallen angels! I was hungry and you gave me no food; I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger and you gave me no welcome; naked and you gave me no clothing. I was ill and in prison and you did not come to visit me.' Then they in turn will ask, 'When did we see you hungry or thirsty, or homeless or naked, or ill or in prison, and not take care of you?' The answer will come, 'The truth is, as often as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me.' They will go off to eternal punishment, and the just will go off to eternal life."

Second Reading ~ *from In God's Time: The Bible and the Future, Dr. Craig C. Hill*

Let me be honest. I do not like judgment. The mere mention of the word recalls the most unpleasant memories from my childhood, such as the famous incident in which I managed to break almost an entire cabinet-ful of my mother's china. I can well imagine appearing before the throne of God and being told "Craig, I have a bone to pick with you..." No, judgment is not my idea of a good time, and I sympathize with those kindhearted pastors who eliminate the topic from their preaching. Grace is an altogether easier sell, at least in my little corner of Christendom. We like to emphasize those bits of Scripture that speak of God's extraordinary forgiveness and mercy. The parable of the Prodigal Son plays well, as does the Lost Sheep....

All the same, one has to face the fact that a substantial portion of Jesus' teaching concerned judgment. One group of parables speaks of the eschatological division of the human race; we are either sheep or goats, good fish or bad fish, wheat or tares. Other parables speak of different outcomes based on different responses, e.g., the Sower, the Ten Bridesmaids, the Talents. Add to the mix the many sayings about the coming judgment by the Son of Man, and the resultant picture may appear more than a little foreboding.