

Christ the King SML A 2017  
MT 25:31-46

Like the best of teachers that Jesus is, He tells us this evening (morning) about that day which will come to all of us, when we will stand face to face in front of Him. He tells us now, what it is we will be judged on, on that day. Let us pray for the grace to take His words to heart, and for the grace to grow in love.

We can try to say whatever we want, but there is no escaping that this an extraordinarily sober gospel. This is the last thing Jesus says to His disciples before Holy Week begins. So we will want to pay particular attention to the last words that passed from His lips, the last words of his public ministry. He's speaking to us frankly, directly and soberly, about the last things:

- ✓ death,
- ✓ judgment,
- ✓ heaven,
- ✓ hell
- ✓ and purgatory

in one word, eschatology, the study of the last things.

You are going to die. It's the only thing that everybody in this Church knows for sure. As I said, last week, life is short, death is certain, and eternity is long. As I was preaching those words last Saturday night, my cousin collapsed on the steps of St. John's Church in Center City, and passed a short time later, and we buried him on Wednesday. So we might die 50 years from now. It might be tonight.

And when I die, I'm going to stand face to face before the King, and make no mistake. Jesus is the King. And while it doesn't seem so right now from what we read in the papers, what from what human history portrays, do not be deceived. Christ is the King, and on the day you die, that Christ is King will be abundantly clear to all of us. And on that day, which is either at the end of my life, or when He comes back, whichever comes first, I'm going to stand in front of Him and so are you. And I'm going to be judged. And so are you. And every single person in this Church is going to hear one of two things. I'm either going to hear him say, "Come, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Or I'm going to hear him say, "Depart from me."

That doesn't scare me, but it sure does get my attention! Jesus doesn't speak this directly to us to frighten us. He

speaks to us this directly to shake us, to wake us up out of the allusion that we can live with so easily. That death is something I can think about later, or that judgment is no big deal. Life is short. Death is certain. Eternity is long.

Everything is at stake. He tells me, like a great teacher, in advance, what He is going to judge me on. He tells us what's on the test. And note what He does not judge them on. He doesn't judge them on gross sins. And let's be careful there. Sin is real. We better repent if we're in the state of it, as we don't want to presume God's mercy, because presuming God's mercy is the sin of presumption. In today's gospel, He's not judging them on what they've done. Instead those who are on his left are on His left because of what they did not do. They did nothing. Not because of terrible things they've done. They just never saw Him. Their eyes were blind to His face, and the face of all those around them who were in need.

You all know I like to work out at the gym. When I was at St. Benedict, I would see one of my students who attended religious education. He was confirmed. He was, how shall I say, a "spirited" student. But I rarely saw him in Church. I saw him much more often at the gym than I did at Mass. I like to describe St. Mary of the Lakes as a gym for the soul with all

the spiritual exercises we offer. Which brings me to another question for those who are here. Are you spiritually fat? In other words, you're fed, but you work off no calories, spiritually speaking. Do you perform spiritual works of mercy? Do you perform corporal works of mercy, all listed in today's gospel? And I think I would lose my salt if I didn't say anything to him about it. "Hey, Steve, coming back to Church any time soon?" And one time he said, "Oh come on Father, I'm a nice guy." A nice guy? Is being a nice guy all it takes to get into heaven?

After Hurricane Sandy, St. Benedict was at it for weeks distributing food and clothing. We converted an empty supermarket into a relief warehouse. When I got back to the gym, I ran into Steve, who prided himself for not missing one workout after the hurricane. People needed food and water. Lord, when did we see you hungry? When did we see you thirsty? People needed clothing. When did we see you naked? Did you perform these corporal works of mercy? Steve didn't. We received truckloads of help from as far away as Pittsburgh and Florida, and we needed muscle from people like Steve, and he did nothing other than he never missed a workout. But he's a nice guy.

So what do we do with this extraordinary sober gospel? This direct challenging word from God spoken to you and to me this evening (morning)? Well I would suggest we simply wake up.

Wherever and whenever we're asleep, we wake up. We wake up from the illusion that death is something to be thought about later. Think about death now. Live now, in such a way as to be prepared for then. As a priest mentor once said to me, "Dan, you will never make sense out of your life until you make sense out of your death." Because once you've made sense out of death, now you know how to live. And Jesus is making sense out of death. I'm going to judge you on love. Where you need to wake up, where we need to wake up, where I need to wake up, is to the reality that Jesus is in you, and in you, and in you, and in you. That every time someone stands in front of me, it's Him. And I either slight Him or I love Him. And most of us, and I know I do, have some people in our lives where I find that to be very difficult, which is why there's a huge bowl of Xanax mashed potatoes at Thanksgiving.

So let's ask the Lord in His goodness to put those faces in front of us, people in whom we struggle to see Our Blessed

Lord. Lord, help me to recognize You in him, and to love You in him.

As I said last week, and several times in this homily, life is short, death is certain, and eternity is long. Let us ask the Lord for the grace to be one of those who did something, and not one of those who did nothing.