

One lady who came to vote this past Tuesday here at precinct 160 was disappointed. It wasn't because she looked over the candidates and decided they weren't good enough. It wasn't that she arrived after 7 pm and couldn't cast her vote. She approached the table, showed her id, and prepared to receive her ballot. But something was wrong. She recently moved. Her name wasn't in the books for this precinct. Such a late change meant she had to go back to her previous voting location. Not so easy since she was from somewhere along the east coast. She was too late to make the change, too late to vote in this election, and she left disappointed.

Many people think of heaven as a long line with a gate, a table, and St Peter checking names. If you're on the list you're in, if not a trap door opens immediately sending you to hell. That image is a little like the lady wanting to vote here Tuesday. Her name wasn't on the list so she couldn't vote. Almost nothing about that picture of heaven is accurate according to Jesus in the gospel. But one thing is accurate. Once we reach the last day, once Judgment Day comes, there will be no changes. Your name won't switch lists, you won't be able to sneak in at the last moment.

**Last Judgment means no changes
Contrasts now locked for eternity
Surprising results from each life lived**

Picture the Last Judgment scene. Quite a change from what we normally see. Thousands upon thousands of angels surrounding Jesus. He's the brightest at the center. Even more stunning than the number of angels will be the number of human beings. **"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him."** All nations, of all time, everywhere will gather before Jesus. No human being will escape gathering at the Last Judgment. Suddenly in a flash without warning a separation will take place. The great number of human beings will in an instant show a contrast. A huge change will take place. As we look now it's impossible to tell the contrast. Separating all those people ourselves would take time and monumental effort. For the Son of Man it's easy. **"He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats."** Shepherds can tell the contrast between sheep and goats easily. So can Jesus. Believers to the right; unbelievers left.

The contrasts are easily noticeable. And they're locked in place. No one switches sides. No one lobbies to be on the other side. Right and left, believers and unbelievers are locked in position, contrasts now locked for eternity. Jesus speaks first to the believers. **"Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world."** The believers are now locked for eternity in heaven, perfect bliss, forever. To the unbelievers on the left Jesus speaks too. **"Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."** There's nothing worse than hearing Jesus say to you "Get away." He wanted them saved, they rejected. After the Last Judgment unbelievers will be locked away forever in hell, separated from God.

The picture seems like a long time from now, doesn't it? But eternity is a long time. Once the Last Judgment happens the contrasts will be locked in place. The danger is flirting with the line. At times we willingly do what unbelievers do. We see the "fun" they have and we want that too. We know the line God says we aren't to cross, but we come as close as we can without crossing it. We see the hungry and figure someone else will provide for them. We know those who are strangers but we lack hospitality towards them. We know there's sick out there but we don't have time to visit them. We understand there are prisoners but they probably deserve to be there. The danger is if Jesus returns right now. What if the Last Judgment is right in the middle of you flirting with the line of sin and hell? What if willful sin is the last thing you ever do? Suddenly we realize the danger of looking at the Last Judgment as something far off.

No amount of good living or walking the straight path will ever be good enough to earn something before God. God isn't expecting that you'll be sin free when he returns. God needed to enact a plan of grace. That's how those believers on the right got there. It wasn't based on their actions, it was based on Christ's actions. Jesus always was concerned for the hungry and thirsty. Jesus always noticed the strangers, the sick, and the prisoners and spent time with them. Jesus perfectly lived so he could perfectly win forgiveness freely for you. Christ paid dearly so you would be free of your sins. He prepared your inheritance by winning it on the cross.

In a trial evidence is brought out to back up the charges and show clearly guilt or innocence. At the Last Judgment Christ Jesus will also bring out evidence. It's only right. But there's an important change in God's courtroom. The evidence isn't brought out as part of the accusation prior to judgment. In God's courtroom evidence comes after judgment. The righteous are already going to heaven. The unbelievers are already bound for hell. No changes after judgment, no evidence to say someone needs to be moved. The surprising evidence actually is brought forward from lives lived showing people are right where they belong.

Take note of the believers' reaction when Jesus speaks about them. **"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?"** They won't remember because they weren't keeping track. They weren't writing these things down in some long list to count up all their good deeds. These were surprising results only because they weren't really thinking of them as good deeds. These believers were simply doing what believers do.

The question won't change with the unbelievers. They won't remember seeing Jesus and not doing these things for him. They will have no recollection of skipping out on good deeds. The problem is they won't remember because they never saw Jesus behind all the people they came into contact with. They couldn't see Jesus because they didn't know him by faith and didn't want anything to do with him. These were surprising results for them because they had opportunity to come to know God and his Son Jesus. They didn't want to, they rejected, and so ultimately at the Last Judgment God will reject them.

Yet most of us here, I dare say all of us here, aren't locked in unbelief. We don't see ourselves with the unbelievers. A lack of good deeds would be a surprising result for this group. Examine the evidence in your own life and see if it matches where you think you belong. During Christmas time maybe you're the one giving to charity or working at a shelter for Thanksgiving. You might be the one giving extra time to collect and pass out coats for kids at a school. You serve Jesus in each of those. Your good deeds aren't even always big or out in the world. You raise your children to know the Lord. You feed them, clothe them, and put a roof over their heads. In school you always do your homework and get your assignments done. You get along with coworkers, are polite, and always courteous. Jesus is behind every one of those you show love to in life. The evidence isn't surprising. We're believers doing what believers do.

What's surprising is the way God treats you for any good deeds you do and especially don't do. Not one of your good deeds or mine is counting anything before him. We stand before him stripped of any good deeds, guilty of sin, with no hope in ourselves. Surprisingly at the Last Judgment we'll hear Jesus reciting off all those little moments of goodness we long forgot. Each will be evidence we stand on the right side of Jesus for a reason. Those good works will be evidence of a faith worked by God himself. Through Christ and his love we stand under God's mercy. It was Christ's love that motivated us all along to reflect that love back into the world.

Now motivated by God's love we can search our lives for that place where a good deed waits to be done. A person only you will talk to, not me or anyone else here. A person behind whom is Christ so when you do a good deed for that person you're doing it for Jesus. A situation you'll have that I won't and no one else will here either. A place, a moment, where Jesus will hide behind a situation right in your path. When you do what believers do, serve, love, and do good, you'll be doing it for Jesus.

I felt bad for the lady who couldn't vote. There was nothing I could do to change her situation. When I will look across Jesus and see those standing on his left, I'll feel bad and you will too. But then, at the Last Judgment, there'll be no changes. Eternal life will be locked in and the surprising results from life will be listed. So now is the time. There still is time before the Last Judgment comes to do a good deed, share Jesus, and unleash the power of the Holy Spirit to change someone's soul by grace.