

# Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven

## *Matthew 25:31-46 | Love in Action*

→ *Survey: Let's understand the background and context of the passage.*

Matthew is written for a Jewish audience to highlight Jesus as the promised Messiah, meaning anointed one. They expected this Messiah to set up a kingdom on earth and subdue the enemies of Israel as a conquering king. But Jesus came in humility to conquer sin and death. In this, he set up an upside-down kingdom, where the first will be last, and the last will be first; those seen as the least in the world's eyes will be seen as the greatest in the kingdom, as we learned last week. Therefore true Kingdom people store up treasures in heaven and not on earth because we await the return of King Jesus who will bring about the new heavens and the earth.

We will get a glimpse tonight in Matthew 25 of what will happen when Jesus returns as King, as he comes down in glory. This should remind us of the Parable of the Weeds that we read in Matthew 13. In all of this, Jesus continues to teach us about how true followers will love those in need - or 'the least of these.' We know the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love your neighbor, and we will see how these two can intersect as we read Matthew 25 together.

Read: Matthew 25:31-46 (NIV)

→ *Observe: Let's take a close look at what the text is saying.*

1. Let's set the scene (v. 31-32). Is this in the past, the present, or the future? Who is there? *(Does anyone know who the Son of Man is)?* Where are they and what is happening there?
2. What is the destination of the sheep (v. 33)? How is this different from the goats?
3. How are those on the King's right described (v. 34)? What do they receive? Why (v. 35-36)?
4. How does this contrast what happens to those on the King's left (v. 41-43)?
5. How do the righteous respond to the King (v. 37-39)? What is the King's response (v. 40)?
6. How does this contrast those on the King's left (v. 44-45)?
7. What are the 2 destinations of the sheep and the goats (v. 46)?

→ *Interpret: Let's seek to understand the meaning of this text in its original context.*

1. What does this passage teach about the Son of Man? What adjectives or words describe him? Why does he need to separate the sheep from the goats?
2. Who are the 'least of these brothers and sisters' (v. 40)? What does Jesus mean by verse 40?
3. In a word or two, how would you describe these acts the righteous did in verses 35-36? What do you notice about the types of actions?
4. What does this passage reveal about faith and action? How should someone balance doing the right thing in love, but not getting caught up in a works-based salvation?

→ *Apply: Let's explore where the text intersects with our lives and our world.*

1. How does this passage challenge your understanding of loving others? Where do we sometimes get this wrong as Christians?
2. Who comes to mind when you think of the "least of these" in your life? At SRU? In the Harbor?
  - What do your actions towards them reveal about your relationship with Jesus?
  - In what ways are you loving well? Where can you make improvements?
3. Think of a time when you had your needs met by someone. What did that mean to you? Brainstorm practical ways you can love strangers and the people in need around you. What is one specific way you can love someone (and therefore Jesus) by meeting their needs this week?