

**Date:** April 20-21, 2024

**Title:** The Stories Jesus Told: The Sheep and the Goats

**Scripture:** Matthew 25:31-46

**Speaker:** Mike Chilcoat

Good morning, Orchard Hill Church. What a pleasure and a privilege it is to be here. I'm Mike Chilcoat, Chili. I'm very excited to get to be with you today, to dive into the Word, and continue the series that we're in right now, *The Stories Jesus Told*. So, this is going to be an exciting morning and exciting time together. My wife, Kimi, I, and our three girls, we call Orchard Hill home. I'm on the teaching team, but my 9 to 5 is with Young Life. And so, again, we just absolutely consider it a privilege to get to be here with you this morning.

The last couple of weeks, Kurt has dived into these parables that we see in Matthew 25. There's three of them. I'm going to focus on the third one this morning, but Kurt had a chance to kind of unpack these first couple of parables. And at one point over the last couple of weeks, Kurt had referenced the author, Scott McKnight, and he had talked about how Scott McKnight had taken the word empire. If you remember this, he talked about how he uses the word empire in place of kingdom. He had kind of unpacked what that looks like, why he does that, and why Dr. McKnight feels like that's necessary.

And so, Kurt had said something at some point along the lines of, what do you think of when you hear the word empire? Or it conjures up different thoughts. So, I'm sitting out in the audience among you, the congregation in one of these seats. I'm sure as that question was posed, you know, when empire is said, the word empire is shared, what does that conjure up in your mind? Maybe some of you are thinking of a major company that's the empire of industry. Or maybe you're thinking of a country that has a singular ruler, and is it an empire there? Maybe some of you are thinking of *Empire Strikes Back* or the show *Empire* or something, whatever it is.

Not me. And this might be an indictment of my intelligence level, but I'm sitting there and the first thing that literally pops into my brain and starts playing on a continuous loop is 800-588-2300-EMPIRE today. That played and then continued on a loop. And I thought man, where was that filed away in my brain? And to have it that ready to go. I'm sure other of you had deeper thoughts. But it got me thinking about our brains and how weird they are. Where is that filed away? The little foreman that works in my brain is like, listen, Chili is going to want that information, that jingle. He's going to want that at any point. He wants to know that phone number. So, let's keep that readily available.

I was in Chicago this week for work at a conference and I had to come in a day early before my staff from Pittsburgh arrived. And so, I rented a minivan. I rented a Chrysler Pacifica. And if you want to feel cool folks, rent a minivan as an adult. I'm doing this because we have so many folks to pick up at the airport. But again, I'm by myself. I'm alone. And the Avis employee with mercy in her heart is looking at me and she's like, you know, thank you for being such a valued customer Mr. Chilcoat. I can upgrade you right now free of charge to maybe a nice SUV or a mustang. Would that be helpful? And I have to say no, I'm sticking with the Chrysler Pacifica. Thank you. That's what I want. I want people to know I'm in town, and I'm kind of a big shot. That's how I roll. Hit the pedal. I want to make the floor shake. It's a Pacifica, right? That's what you said.

So, I pass on that. I get the Pacifica, and I pick up my folks. We're going to be late. The conference ends a little late. We're going to be late to the airport. I can't find my keys. I have no recollection of even having keys. I don't even know how to spell key. I don't know. I've never seen keys at this point. And so, we're digging through my hotel room. And this merciful housekeeper comes with them in a bag. I've forgotten them in my room, and it got me thinking. I thought, why does my brain not think that's necessary? Where the keys are to get over to the airport on time, that, it was thrown into a dumpster. But again, the empire jingle is right there. Any time I need it. 800-588-2300-EMPIRE. The brain is weird, man. The urgent file in the front is filled with really weird stuff.

And for me at least, that, I could at any point, I can grab some of these important things. Like for instance, I know emphatically and without a doubt that the best part of waking up is Folgers in my cup. I know that at any point, it's right here. And most importantly, and I would say this trumps even Empire. Let's say I'm caught with only a flip phone, and I don't have access to the internet. I know that if I have a carpeting and flooring emergency, I can call Empire at any point. But even more important than that, is I know that everybody should have fun tonight, but also everyone should Wang Chung tonight. That is there. And that's been some of the most amazing wisdom I've had throughout my entire existence. Maybe otherwise, I would have just had fun in the evenings, but now I can have fun, and I can also Wang Chung. And without that wisdom, I never would have achieved that.

So anyway, I digress. Let's move on. So back to the Scriptures in Matthew 25, where we're at and where Kurt has been walking us through, there's three parables that occur as Jesus gets a chance to kind of unpack these parables with the crowd that's listening. And in the first couple of parables that Kurt has talked about right before in Chapter 24, that's where I want to start this morning. I want to start at the end of Chapter 24, right before he gets to these parables, in verse 30, Jesus is walking them through these parables. And right before He gets there and right before we zoom into the part, I'll focus on this morning which is The Sheep and the Goats at the end of Chapter 25.

Jesus says this right here in verse 30. It says, "Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." So that's the end of chapter 24. It's like a cliffhanger. He tells us what's happening, but then he stops there. And then we dive into these two parables that Kurt walked us through early on in chapter 25, before we get to The Sheep and the Goats, where we sort of focus on this morning.

But he leaves us with this cliffhanger, and then Jesus picks it up again. He talks about how the angels are coming in tow and he's on his way, and then he stops there. We hear these two parables, and then he picks up the story again in verse 31. And that's what we're going to focus on, The Sheep and the Goats.

Oftentimes you hear this term, Son of Man, that Jesus uses here, and you're like, what does that mean? Son of man, more often than not, was how Jesus would refer to himself. If we were going to kind of unpack that, it would oftentimes be the title that Jesus would use to refer to himself. But also, the Son of Man was a title with many things that would include and encapsulate the title of humility. This would have been a way for Jesus to share the great

humility that he had as he put on flesh. It's also his humanity. So, it's humility and humanity of our loving, all powerful savior that even though he didn't have to, even though he was above that, he in love and mercy put on flesh. So, it's Jesus' great humility as the Son of Man and his great humanity as the Son of Man.

Also, it's the fulfillment of prophecy. You see, if you dove into Daniel 7, you'll see the fulfillment of prophecy here with the reference to the Son of Man. And ultimately, it's a title of deity, the embodiment of truth and grace. This is the embodiment of truth and grace. This is why Jesus would refer to Himself as the Son of Man. So, picking up the passage that we just heard read to us in chapter 25, I'm going to look back at verse 31 if you're following along in your Bibles. This is Matthew 25:31. It says this. ""When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him..." Remember that back in 24, that's where he stopped. He picks the story back up again. "...he will sit on his glorious throne." So, Jesus picks up the story here and begins to elaborate on the preparation that He's calling folks to begin, that humanity needs to be ready, that we need to prepare. Why? Because when he comes back again with the angels, until he comes back again, he's going to sit on his glorious throne, King Jesus.

Then it picks up again here in verses 32 and 33. As we unpack those, it says, "All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left." So, just picture this, folks. Picture everyone throughout history, every person that's ever existed, there before the throne of God, sitting there at the throne, at the foot of Jesus. Jesus Christ begins to separate them and put them into two separate groups. You over here to the right, you two over here to the left. I need you over here to the right. Imagine this separation happening, this moment, just like a shepherd would separate his flock. You see, shepherds that tend to sheep and goats might let them intermix and intermingle throughout the day, but at night they will separate, compartmentalize the sheep and the goats into separate sections. So, for a while they might be left to intermix and intermingle with each other, but after a while the separation will happen.

Imagine that moment here of Jesus of God on the throne separating those folks into two sections, the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Yes, Jesus is the humble Son of Man. We've established that Jesus comes, and God puts on flesh. John 1:14 says the the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. The Message translation says God put on skin and moved into the neighborhood. So, we see this humility of the Son of Man. We see that happening here. But we also see an all-powerful king, all powerful king above everything. King Jesus will say to the ones on his right, and I'll pick it up here. He says it better than I ever could here in 34. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'"

The King. The Kingdom is prepared for you. This comes from the authority of the King himself. Do we fully grasp and realize that? Are we tracking with what's happening here and what King Jesus is saying? Since before the beginning of the world, Jesus has had his kingdom prepared for his people. He's prepped it for those on his right. He's prepped this kingdom, this reward. And Jesus will give this ultimate gift to those on His right. According to this passage, Jesus will look at those on the right and he will say here is your inheritance. I wrote you into the will. This is what I have prepped for you. I'm not confined by time, and I

have prepared this place for you. Those on my right. What I have for you will blow away your expectations. It'll be beyond what you could even ask for or beyond what you could even picture. It'll blow away your expectations. This is what I have prepared for you.

And then he'll go on to say that this is because, and I'll pick it up here in verse 35. "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." The king says this to them, and they respond with this here in verse 37. It says, "Then the righteous will answer him, '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?' The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

So, here's King Jesus above everything, with great humility. The Son of Man saying when you love the least of these, when you showed love to them, you loved me. The person who's overlooked, the person who's belittled, the person who's looked at as subhuman or looked past, whatever it is. That person, the least of these, when you loved them, you loved me. The least of these, the people that the world will look past or belittle the way we treat this group is vitally important to Jesus. The way we treat this group is of vital importance.

Verses 41 through 44 picks it up and Jesus expands and says this. "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'" When did that happen? We'll sort of shrug and say, I don't recall because they would be thinking of course, we would help you, a king, a mighty king. Yes, we would have helped you. For the king, we would have done what we needed to do.

But you see, Jesus flips this hierarchy on its head. Jesus flips the social rankings the way that we compartmentalize folks, the way that society ranks people's importance. He flips that on its head. You prepare for that day by looking out for the least of these. How do we prep? How do we begin to prepare? We look out for the least of these. And Jesus is making it clear here not for personal gain or to manipulate a situation, but Jesus says that if you ignore them, you're ignoring me.

He concludes chapter 25 in Matthew with these couple of verses here. These are hard hitting. It says here in 45 and 46, "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." What does Jesus mean by these two verses, these hard-hitting verses? What does he mean by that? Let's spend a little time here, camp out, and unpack these two verses. Could this be a source of major confusion about legalism and works based salvation? Could these verses be what maybe has confused me and you for a long time in society, for a long time about works-based salvation?

I remember being a young kid watching Looney Tunes or some cartoon or something, and there'd be a moment where there'd be an angel on one shoulder and a devil on the other, and they would be sort of weighing things. They'd have a scale and be like, if your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds, the devil would disappear and then you'd go with it. And that has sort of been ingrained in us that it's a works-based salvation. If I can keep up enough good deeds, if my good deeds outnumber my bad deeds, then I'll be okay. This might be where some people's confusion about salvation lies. This works-based salvation.

At first glance, someone could get confused and mistakenly think that the Lord is saying that you're saved by your good works. If your good deeds outnumber your bad deeds, you'll go to heaven. Otherwise, you'll go to hell. There's a big scale and good deeds and bad deeds are these little pebbles that you throw on the scale. And boy, they better outnumber the bad ones. This isn't what Jesus is saying at all. In fact, Scripture is abundantly clear about it, and I'll give you one or a couple of verses here that are very well-known verses in the Bible.

Ephesians 2:8-9 clears it up by saying this. It says, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this is not from yourselves..." It's a free gift, unmerited favor. You can't earn it. It's a gift. So, "...it is the gift of God-not by works, so that no one can boast." Scripture is very clear. Throughout scripture I could reference a dozen other passages that would make it abundantly clear that it's not works-based. Scripture is very clear about salvation, for it's by grace. You've been saved through faith. So, it's God's gift. We didn't earn it. God earned it. We didn't pay the penalty. He paid the penalty. He knew he couldn't do it on our own.

We're saved through our faith of saying, God, I believe you are who you say you are. Jesus, I believe that you are the Son of God and that you raised from the dead, and I can put my hand in your hand, and I can trust you. And Jesus, I am so thankful, abundantly thankful. My heart overflows with thankfulness because of what you've done in your grace, your free gift that I didn't earn, and faith in God's grace and provision in His love and His power that will save us. That's where salvation lies, not through works. However, what this passage is talking about is there should be evidence of that in your life, a true conversion, a true change, a true transformation.

I had a friend named Chad who was in ministry with me for a long time, really talented guy. He's going to Texas now, and he has his doctorate in theology and he's doing really good things. But he still hasn't forgotten how to roll his sleeves up and get into the lives of people. He had a small group of guys that he was working with, some high school knuckleheads, much like me, out of control kids that you just feel like, am I making any progress with these students at all? And he's meeting with these guys, and these guys weren't just knuckleheads, they were playful guys that joked around a lot. They were a pretty mean-spirited crew. He was becoming really frustrated because he's like, these guys are bullies. They're self-centered. They pick on other people. They look out for number one. This is a tough crowd. And he would diligently meet with them and dive into the Word, study, and pray what it looked like to follow Jesus.

One day, he's so frustrated that his frustrations bubble over. He says to these kids, listen, you're saved by God's grace through faith. That's true. However, I see absolutely zero evidence of an authentic faith in your life. I don't see any fruit from this tree. I would be

nervous if I were you. You see, if it's an authentic faith and we're saved through faith, right? Don't get it wrong. It's not through works. However, that authentic transformation would compel you and drive you to go sacrificially love, give your life away, and to look out for those that are in trouble.

The opposite of this, just saying, yes, I want Jesus' salvation, but it's really just kind of a get out of jail free card. I'm going to check this box. That's what Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls cheap grace. That costs you nothing, right? If someone really believes something is true, you can see evidence of that in their actions. The Book of James talks about this in James chapter 2 verses 14 through 17. It says, "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." People who are serious about their faith and their walk with Jesus and truly believe with empowerment by the Holy Spirit should realize the calling and the urgency of serving and of sacrificial love.

So, serving and works aren't the pathway to salvation, but they certainly provide evidence of an authentic and true belief in Jesus and his commands and his promises. As the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, it renovates us from the inside out. We want to see our lives count for something. We want to be a part of God's redemptive plan. We want to have our lives count for something eternal, for it to matter that we were here beyond ourselves. If it's just about us making ourselves comfortable, living a comfortable life, and it really didn't matter that you were here for other people, that's a problem. Sacrificial love is the only way, and it's the calling and the only pathway forward for the true, authentic believer and follower of Christ. Living out your life like this is a demonstration that you are leaning into your faith and that you're not just a nominal believer but rather an authentic disciple. You see, serving the least of these is of vital importance.

Maybe this quote will help make this more practical here in our lives in 2024. And this comes from Tim Keller. The late Tim Keller is one of my favorites. We lost him here recently. But Tim Keller, in a sermon that he gave in 2009 when he was talking about Matthew 25, he put it this way to help summarize who are the least of these. Who is this passage talking about? I think this might help. Keller says this. "In the Bible the word poor would include the weak, the elderly, the mentally and physically handicapped, refugees, new immigrants, working poor, natural disaster victims, the unemployed, single parent families, orphans, etc. All of those could fall into the poor category and have been earmarked in the Bible to take special attention and to look out for these folks."

So, stop and think about who the poor in my life are that I need to get in closer proximity to, lean into help, and roll my sleeves up and get involved, rather than just give lip service and say, oh, I hope you're well fed, and everything works out okay. These people would all fit into that category. So, true believers are concerned for the poor, and they are compelled to do something about it. Jesus points out brothers and sisters. He specifically earmarks, brothers and sisters. That's important to look at because we need to be concerned and look out for every poor person in the entire world. We need to look out for everyone that would fall into the least of these categories. But specifically, Jesus also points out and looks out specifically for Christian poor, the Christ fallen poor. We need to take special attention to look out for

them. Right? We are called to love sacrificially, but we are called to care for and look out for those who have suffered the most in Jesus' name. Yes, we can recognize true conversion by the presence of sacrificial love, but we must never believe that our sacrificial love causes true conversion.

I hope I'm making that clear where salvation lies, but where evidence is of a true conversion. First Peter does it better than I could ever do it. He says it here in chapter 1 verses 22 and 23. Check this out. "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." The command to love others is unwavering, and it's clear. However, it can't be done and obeyed on our own strength. I can't do it. You can't do it. It has to be through Christ's strength, right? Sacrificial love with a pure heart flows from Jesus and Jesus alone. He is that imperishable seed.

It's not about what you've done, or I've done. Thank the Lord. It's not about that. Think about that for a second. It's not about our good deeds. It's also not about our bad deeds. Thank the Lord. If we got what we deserved and we got justice, that's not something we want. That Jesus is just because He was the perfect sacrifice and he paid it all on a cross. So, justice was served. But we couldn't have done it.

Once you've been saved and have begun to realize that you can't change on your own, your priorities will begin to change, and your actions will begin to result in good deeds. Giving generously and looking out for the poor should flow out of that salvation that Christ has given you. The goats in this passage didn't go to hell because of what they've done but what they failed to do. They were complacent and comfortable. They were looking out for themselves, and they were self-focused. Is that a sin that has sort of permeated and leaked in and penetrated your life and your heart?

The bigger problem is there is something wrong in their relationship with Jesus, that's the key here. There's something wrong in their relationship with Jesus. The fact that they have very little evidence of sacrificial love is the domino effect that flows back to the original relational issue between them and Jesus. What's the greatest commandment that we see here in Matthew 22, just a few chapters earlier? The greatest commitment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. And the second is like it, to love others as you love yourself. The greatest commandment is accompanied with love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your mind, soul, and strength. That's the most important thing. But then allow that love as it penetrates and overflows out of our heart to flow out of our lives to other people, specifically the poor, in the least of these. It's the greatest commandment. A failure and breakdown in our love for others around us is indicative of a breakdown and failure in our love for Jesus. When you didn't care for these, you didn't care for me.

So, we need to be ready, and we need to be prepared. Here's some lessons in readiness. True Believers. Let's just recap a little bit. One, true believers care for the poor, especially the Christian poor. Two, they went to hell not for what they did, but for what they failed to do. The goats. Three, there seems to be a deeper problem here. The break there, the division there, the barricade there, is a relational issue with them in Jesus or in our case, us in Jesus.

As Kurt talked the last couple of weeks about these parables, and I just finished the third parable there, The Sheep and the Goats. If you look at all three parables, a group is waiting for Jesus. He shows up, and he separates them into two groups. In all three parables you see the same imagery. Also, the first group had been doing the right thing all along. They were ready. They entered heaven. They were spending time in the gym. They were ready. They were prepared. They were seen. The big picture, the 30,000-foot view, they're saying I need to start rolling my sleeves up through the empowerment of Jesus, not through salvation, but because of the salvation that Jesus bestowed and renovated my heart. It will compel me to go now and do action and love others. And they were ready. They were preparing and they entered heaven.

The other group did nothing or they did something superficial. And here's the things that you notice here in all three parables, they all had excuses. They were all surprised or bitter. They all went to hell. They all had a problem in their relationship with Jesus. That's where they missed it. None of them were ready. None of them were prepared. You see, doing nothing is a big problem. Blatant sin is one thing and it's out there for everyone to see and it's pretty obvious. But doing nothing is more of a covert sin. It's a sin of omission, and it can be less obvious.

There are different ways to do nothing. We can fall into complacency, and we can fall into the trap of doing nothing in a few different ways. One is you see this a lot. You'll see the people that do nothing militantly. They do nothing. And if you call them on that, they get angry, and they're upset, and they fly off the handle quickly. Next, you see doing nothing passively. You just sort of stay under the radar, fly under the radar. I really don't want to be bothered.

Then there's also one of the more confusing and hard ones to find and to identify, and maybe this is you. It's doing nothing with high achievement and high capacity. Maybe this is the strong, powerful, successful businessman or businesswoman, or maybe it's a doctor. Or maybe a high caliber athlete where I'm so focused, I have such tunnel vision for this thing that I'm doing and I'm giving all my hours and all my time to achieve to the highest level that I possibly can, that I do not have time for anyone else. I don't have time for any of these other things or any of these least of these or any of the other situations.

And there's going to be a moment where we stand, if you're a high caliber, high achieving person, which God bless you, that's awesome. Do the best you can. In fact, my attitude towards success and money is make as much as you can, give as much as you can, save as much as you can. I think if you have access and capacity to do it, do it. So don't hear me wrong. But if you are not with open hands saying God, even though I'm high capacity and even though I'm successful, I need to continue to live out your kingdom and they need to at least have margins where I can sacrificially love. If you're not thinking about those things and prioritizing them, you're going to miss out. You're going to end up being a high capacity, do nothing. Because there's going to be a moment where you have to ask yourself, why didn't you tell them about Jesus? Why did you do nothing about the eternal question or about a people's eternal destinations when you were so distracted by these other things?

Scottie Scheffler's interview after the Masters, if you saw it, was mind blowing. He was like, why do I want to win so much? But then someone reminded me that it's all paid on the cross,

that my victory is on the cross, and it's more important than a golf tournament. That's a guy at the top of his game. And I'm not saying Scottie Scheffler shouldn't win as much as he can. I hope he wins every Master's from here on out. I love Scottie Scheffler. I'm not saying that. Achieve, achieve, achieve. Right? But if you can't stop and realize that there's things that are more important than that, you are going to leave and realize that you are a high capacity do nothing.

I sin. You sin. We've all sinned, right? Confession, confession, confession. I'm not talking about the sins we commit here. What I'm talking about, what I'm urging us into, and I'm talking to myself first because I'm a mess. So, what I'm urging us into is orienting our lives and setting the course of our life around things that are other than Jesus. If we orient our lives around things that aren't Christ, that He's not first, right? If we're refusing or lazy or missing out on Jesus and the eternal opportunities, then we will never get to invest in things that matter long term, in things that won't rust, spoil, or fade and things that are eternal. They'll brush past us.

So, here's some steps that we can take that would be helpful. Some applicable steps here. One, admit that you have a problem. I need to admit that I have a problem. You admit that you have a problem here. This can be challenging for the passive or nice people that are like, oh, they never hurt a fly. I understand, but if you're doing nothing, you're still not being part of God's redemptive plan. So, start with admitting that you have a problem.

Two, get right with Jesus. What's righteousness? Righteousness is just right with ness. If we have a broken relationship with Jesus and there's something there, Jesus loves us enough that He gives us full access to Him. At any point we can come to him and confess and say, Jesus, I'm sorry, I've wronged you and I've taken my eye off the prize. I want to be your person. I want to be used in an eternal way by you, Lord Jesus.

Three, start doing something now. Don't put this off. Start with the discipline of reading the Word and diving into prayer some. If you don't do that at all, start today with just and take baby steps. Jump into the Word for 5 or 10 minutes, jump into prayer for 5 or 10 minutes and say, I'm going to try to do this every day, and I'm going to start in the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and I'm going to read about Jesus. And then maybe you can expand that and make that a little bit bigger as you grow in your walk with him. But start today with those little disciplines. As you do, God will feed your soul and encourage you as He blesses you with an outlet to do something eternal.

Prayer in Scripture, loving others, and then cultivate gratitude in your heart. Are you constantly grumbling and complaining and gossiping? Are you? Are you cultivating gratitude and thankfulness in your heart? In conclusion, God isn't going to force you to live your life a certain way. However, he will call you to give an account in the end. The Scripture was really clear on this. Will you be faithful? Will you come in and enjoy your master's happiness? Will you hear well done, good and faithful servant at the end?

No one knows when Jesus will return. So, we need to be ready at all times. Our obedience in this, flows out of how God has reached us and loves us and paid it all for us. We prepare because we have hope and purpose found in a relationship with Jesus Christ and we have a

chance to be a part of His redemptive plan and have our lives count for more than we ever dreamed possible.

God, thank you for this time this morning. Jesus, I'm thankful that you give us hope and purpose. I'm thankful that Lord, you are calling us for preparation so that we can live life to the fullest that's found in you. And Lord, I pray that out of the overflow of our hearts, we begin to give that love away into the lives of other people around us and that we look with our head on a swivel for people in need, and that we go and step out of our comfort zone and care for them with the love found in you and you alone, Lord Jesus. In your name I pray. Amen. Thank you so much for being here this morning.