

MISSION
MATTHEW 25:31–46
LESSON 3



WELCOME

Recall a time you received an act of kindness and what it meant to you.

BACKGROUND

From the very beginning of His earthly ministry Jesus was “on mission.” Early in His ministry, He traveled to His hometown, Nazareth. While attending synagogue there, He stood up to read the Scriptures. He purposefully read a passage from Isaiah:

*“The Spirit of the LORD is upon me
For he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released,
that the blind will see,
that the oppressed will be set free,
and that the time of the LORD’s favor has come.”¹*

Jesus then said, “*The Scripture you’ve just heard has been fulfilled this very day!*”²

Throughout the Gospels, we find Jesus fulfilling His mission as described in **Isaiah 61**—Jesus made the blind see, made the lame walk, healed the sick and preached the Good News to the poor.³

An element of our allegiance to God includes responding to Jesus’ call to intentionally live “on mission” like He did. We are called to be part of His redemptive Kingdom work through proclaiming the Gospel,⁴ making disciples,⁵ and demonstrating the Kingdom through our actions.⁶

¹ **Luke 4:18–19**, referencing **Isaiah 61:1–2**

² **Luke 4:21**

³ **Luke 7:22**

⁴ The Gospel is presented in **John 3:16**.

⁵ **Matthew 28:19–20**

⁶ **Matthew 25:31–46**



WORD

As you come to the Word, pause and ask God to make it come alive for you.

Context: In **Matthew 25**, Jesus taught two parables about how to live in the Kingdom of God. The first parable of the ten bridesmaids warned of a judgment to come for people who have never chosen to truly know Jesus as Lord. The second parable of the loaned money warned of judgment for those who never use their God-given abilities to serve God. Jesus followed up these parables with teaching on the final judgment, highlighting the need for His followers to live “on mission”—participating in the redemptive work of Christ by caring for and loving the people around them.

Matthew 25:31–46

³¹ *“But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.*

³⁴ *“Then the King (see footnote ⁷) will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. ³⁶ I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’*

³⁷ *“Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? ³⁹ When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’*

⁴⁰ *“And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to*

⁷ While Jesus constantly refers to Himself as the Son of Man, this is the only place in the Gospels where He speaks of the Son of Man as the King, thus assuring His followers that He has the authority and knowledge to act as judge. Erdman, Charles Rosenbury. *The Gospel of Matthew: An Exposition*. Westminster Press, 1977. 229

one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, (see footnote ⁸) you were doing it to me!’

⁴¹ *“Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, ‘Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. ⁴² For I was hungry, and you didn’t feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn’t give me a drink. ⁴³ I was a stranger, and you didn’t invite me into your home. I was naked, and you didn’t give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn’t visit me.’*

⁴⁴ *“Then they will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?’*

⁴⁵ *“And he will answer, ‘I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.’*

⁴⁶ *“And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.”*

1. What did Jesus announce He would do in the future? (**25:31–34**)

2. In biblical times, sheep and goats often grazed together but were separated when it came time to shear the sheep. Jesus used this familiar image as a metaphor to distinguish genuine followers from pretenders and unbelievers.⁹ Which group will Jesus place at His right hand¹⁰ and why did He separate them? (**25:33–36**)

⁸ “There has been much discussion about the identity of the ‘brothers and sisters.’ Some have said they are the Jews; others say they are all Christians; still others say they are suffering people everywhere. ... The point of this [teaching] is not the who, but the what—the importance of serving where service is needed. The focus of this [teaching] is that we should love every person and serve everyone we can. Such love for others glorifies God by reflecting our love for him.” *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 1597

⁹ **Ezekiel 34:17–24** uses this same spiritual metaphor.

¹⁰ Culturally, the right hand was a place of power and honor, which is why Jesus is placed at the right hand of the Father in heaven. Gaebelein, Frank E., et al. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with the New International Version of the Holy Bible*. Zondervan Pub. House, 1984. 521. See **Acts 7:55–56**.

- a. What is your perspective on the significance of the things the sheep did?
- b. What was their response, and why do you think they would react that way? (25:37–39)
- c. How did Jesus answer their questions? (25:40)
- d. What does Jesus' answer say to you about who He is?
- e. How did His response relate to His mission as stated in **Isaiah 61:1–2**?

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me,
for the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted
and to proclaim that captives will be released
and prisoners will be freed.
He has sent me to tell those who mourn
that the time of the LORD's favor has come ...*

3. “The focus of this [teaching] is that we should love every person and serve anyone we can.”¹¹ How does this statement challenge you or change your perspective?
 - a. What things may be getting in the way of you being able to make mental, emotional and actual space to be Jesus’ hands and feet to hurting or needy people?
 - b. How is Holy Spirit calling you to love, share and serve? Consider making it a regular practice to ask Jesus to open your eyes throughout the day to see the needs (both spiritual and physical) of those around you.
4. What reward is promised to the people who do these good deeds in **Matthew 25:34**?

¹¹ *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 1597

- a. Why would they be granted such rewards when Scripture is clear that Christians are saved by faith, not deeds?¹²
- b. “Those who helped did not think that they were helping Christ and thus piling up eternal merit; they helped because they could not stop themselves. It was the natural, instinctive, quite uncalculating reaction of the loving heart.”¹³
How does this statement inspire or challenge you?
5. In contrast to the “sheep,” who will Jesus place at His left hand and why? (25:33, 41–43)
- a. What do you think their failure to respond to human needs reveals about them?

¹² **Romans 1:17–18; 3:22, 28; 4:3; Galatians 2:16; 3:11; Ephesians 2:8–9** and many more Scriptures teach salvation by faith and not by good deeds. However, good deeds are evidence of true faith in Christ and a changed heart. Those good deeds flow from a moral and righteous character—a Kingdom character. This is not about receiving eternal life simply because of good deeds. Gaebelin, Frank E., et al. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary. with the New International Version of the Holy Bible*. Zondervan Pub. House, 1984. 229; Barclay, William. *The Gospel of Matthew Vol. 2*. Westminster Press, 1975. 325

¹³ Barclay, William. *The Gospel of Matthew Vol. 2*. Westminster Press, 1975. 325

b. What did Jesus say to them and how did it re-confirm His heart for hurting people? (25:45)

6. The things Jesus chose to highlight—“giving a hungry person a meal, or a thirsty person a drink, welcoming a stranger, cheering the sick, visiting the prisoner—are things which anyone can do. It is not a question of giving away thousands of dollars, or of writing our names in the annals of history; it is a case of giving simple help to the people we meet every day.”¹⁴
Who do you know who may be hungry, thirsty, in need of clothing, in need of hospitality or in need of a visit? How could you meet their needs?

What additional ways could we express Christ’s Kingdom mission?¹⁵

¹⁴ Barclay, William. *The Gospel of Matthew Vol. 2*. Westminster Press, 1975. 325

¹⁵ While the passage in this lesson focuses on meeting physical needs, the broader Kingdom mission we are called to is woven throughout the New Testament.

Matthew 28:19–20 speaks to other critical aspects of Kingdom mission: “*Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*”

7. What pronouncement did Jesus make in **verse 46**?

Based on this pronouncement, reflect on the depth and seriousness of Jesus' desire for us to participate in His Kingdom mission.

8. In your own words, summarize how you see the Kingdom mission Christ has called you/is calling you to engage in.

Comment on what our neighborhoods, nations and world might look like if Christians universally engaged in Jesus' Kingdom mission.



WORSHIP

Take a moment to enter into a time of worship—both on your own and with your community—to show praise, adoration and love for God.

In this passage, Jesus is picturing His followers as compassionate, caring people who persevere in well-doing, show love to all people, notice needs and respond. This way of living—this missional life—was routinely modeled by Jesus throughout His ministry.

In the psalm below, write at least three ways you’ve experienced Jesus’ love and kindness through others in recent years and then pray **Psalm 9:1–2** as an act of worship.

*I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart
I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done.*

*I will be filled with joy because of you.
I will sing praises to you, O Most High.
Amen.*

CONVERSATION PROMPTS

Consider using one of the conversation prompts this week to begin having a spiritual conversation with someone in your life.

- Do you have a “mission” you live by? How would you define it?
- What are you devoted to?
- When have you received an act of kindness? What did it mean to you?

TAKE-AWAY SUMMARY

As you have worked through this lesson and listened to Holy Spirit, what is your one significant take-away?

Write a brief summary of your take-away on page 116.

SERMON NOTES

Lesson 3

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, occupying most of the page. It is intended for the user to write their sermon notes for Lesson 3.

Prayer Requests