

When we think of the Last Judgment,
When Christ will return in glory with his angels and judge the nations,
We may have this idea of God's wrath, coming to punish the wicked
around us, saving us out of the world.

But from our Lord's own words today,
We see that the last judgment, though it is a fearful thing,
When our hearts will be opened and our deeds laid bare,
It is not a fearful thing because God threatens mankind.
Rather, we see that the measure of God's judgment is His mercy.

The standard that we will be measured against is God's mercy.
In the Parable, we see he says to those on the right, his sheep,
Inherit the kingdom prepared for you
For I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was
naked and you clothed me, I was a stranger and you took me in, I was
a prisoner and you visited me.
For as much as we did it unto the least of these, his brethren, our
fellow man
We did it to him.

And likewise he chastises those on the left, the goats, for failing to do
the same things.

Why is mercy the measure of judgment?
Because "blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy."
When we show mercy, we are living the way God lives.
God saw mankind fall into sin and error, and he did not destroy us.
Rather, we became hungry, and he continued to feed us, even
becoming human and giving us his very body.
We were thirsty and he gave us drink, living water of the Holy Spirit
and the fount of his life-giving blood.

We were strangers to God and the kingdom because of sin,
and he brought us in.

We were naked, stripped of the glory we had before the fall,
And he clothed us in Christ and our baptismal garment.

We were in the prison of death and the devil, and he came and visited
us, entering into the very heart of the prison, the tomb, and set us free.

Mercy is the way God lives and loves us,

And so mercy will be our judge on the last day.

Doing the merciful things of Christ, living the gospel commandments,
Following the Way of Christ,

Makes us like him. Makes us citizens of the Kingdom.

This is why there are sheep and goats in the parable--

By doing different things, we truly become different things.

We either are sheep in his flock,

Or goats outside his fold. There is no middle category

But if mercy is our judge, it is not simply merciful acts of charity

It is mercy born out of love,

Recognizing in our brother the image of God,

The image of Christ.

And so philanthropy is not a replacement for Christian living.

Giving money toward a cause is not a substitute for direct acts of love
we are called to do.

Supporting a certain political party or a government program

Is not a replacement for the acts of mercy and charity we are
commanded to do.

Rather, we will be judged for how we loved or failed to love those in
our path--those in God's image, right in front of us.

Brother's and sisters,

Who has God placed in your path to show mercy to?
Who in your life, your town, your community, your world,
Is in need of mercy,
Is hungry, whether for food or for the good news of the gospel,
Is thirsty, for water or for the forgiveness of their sins?
Who do you know that is a stranger and needs you to welcome them
in? Who is naked or without dignity in need of your help? Who is in
prison, whether literally, or in the prison
Of sin, of sickness and old age, the prison of loneliness--
Who do you need to go and visit?

Consider these things in the Lenten season, and act on them.
Because God has given us these people, these brethren in our life, to
fulfill his work of mercy on the earth.
They are our opportunity for salvation or damnation on the last day.
Let us see Christ in our brother, and be merciful towards him,
In love,
As Christ is merciful in love toward us.