

As we complete day 21 of our 30 Days of Heartwork devotional series, let's dive into Jesus' words in Matthew 25:31-46. Take a moment to read through it, then we'll visit some themes I have highlighted below.

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**The Promised Kingdom:** Recall/reference the vision the old testament prophet Daniel had (7:13-14), when the Son of Man is given dominion, glory, and a kingdom. Jesus echoes this promise here in verse 31, foretelling under what conditions the final judgment would take place. The fact that the establishment of this kingdom was ordained from the very beginning should not be lost on us, as God's plans transcend spans of time that are incomprehensible to us, and have a demonstrated track record. In short, we can take Him at his word.

**The Sheep and the Goats:** Jesus reveals His role to us as both king and shepherd, separating people as sheep would be from goats. These complimentary roles remind us how both tender and just He is in the exercise of His authority, and how intimately knowledgeable He is of those in His care.

**Expectation of the Righteous:** The sheep to His right are invited to enter into eternal life for their acts of compassion and kindness towards those deemed to be the least among His brothers. As Romans 8:35 reminds us, neither tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, or danger could separate us from the love of Christ; neither should we preclude others from our own acts of love just because they are afflicted or marginalized. John 13:34 further sums this up in a memorable commandment.

**Eternal Consequence:** The wicked, depicted as goats, are condemned for their failure to care for those in need, resulting in eternal punishment that is designated for the devil and his angels. This parable gives us a sense of the weight behind the second greatest commandment, love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:39). The takeaway should not be "I'm not getting into Heaven because I did not go out of my way to feed that homeless person I walked by last week." Rather, those who love the Lord and keep his commandments (John 14:15) demonstrate evidence of their kingdom citizenry by serving others in this regard. Let this revelation be encouraging and transformative; consider seeing it as a call for action rather than regret.

In conclusion, today's devotional reveals God's eternal sovereignty in establishing the kingdom entrusted to our Lord, shepherd, and King: Jesus Christ. As His sheep, we are distinguishable from the goats via our obedience to such imperatives as loving our neighbor, regardless of how marginalized or worse off than us they might be. The fact that our treatment of others in this life and how it is assessed in detail is certainly

impressionable, but even more than that, the level of intimacy and care with which Jesus regards his brothers and sisters should impact us in a way that drives us to serve accordingly to the spiritual gifts we possess. Serving others with our time, finances, relationships, resources, talents, etc. will hopefully draw them to accept the invitation for eternal life by emanating the love Jesus has for those He calls His sheep.