

**Monday, November 19 - Read Matthew 25:31-46.** God will separate his obedient followers from pretenders and unbelievers. The real evidence of our belief is the way we act. To treat all persons we encounter as if they are Jesus is no easy task. What we do for others demonstrates what we really think about Jesus' words to us - feed the hungry, give the homeless a place to stay, look after the sick. How well do your actions separate you from pretenders and unbelievers? We are now over 5 weeks removed from Hurricane Michael, are your actions different now? Do you have the same attitude as you did the days after learning about the devastation?

**Tuesday, November 20 – Read Matthew 25:34-40.** This parable describes acts of mercy we all can do every day. These acts do not depend on wealth, ability, or intelligence; they are simple acts freely given and freely received. We have no excuse to neglect those who have deep needs, and we cannot hand over this responsibility to the church or government. Jesus demands our personal involvement in caring for others' needs. **Read Isaiah 58:7.**

**Wednesday, November 21 – Read Matthew 25:40.** There has been much discussion about the identity of the "brothers." Some have said they are the Jews; others say they are all Christians; still others say they are suffering people everywhere. Such a debate is much like the lawyer's earlier question to Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29). The point of this parable is not the who, but the what - the importance of serving where service is needed. The focus of this parable is that we should love every person and serve anyone we can. Such love for others glorifies God by reflecting our love for him.

**Thursday, November 22 – Read Matthew 25:46.** Eternal punishment takes place in hell (the lake of fire, or Gehenna), the place of punishment after death for all those who refuse to repent. In the Bible, three words are used in connection with eternal punishment. (1) Sheol, or the "the grave," is used in the Old Testament to mean the place of the dead, generally thought to be under the earth. (2) Hades is the Greek word for the underworld, the realm of the dead. It is the word used in the New Testament for Sheol. (3) Gehenna, or hell, was named after the Valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem where children were sacrificed by fire to the pagan gods. This is the place of eternal fire prepared for the devil, his angels and all those who do not believe in God. This is the final and eternal state of the wicked after the resurrection and the last judgment. When Jesus warns against unbelief, he is trying to save us from agonizing punishment.

**Friday, November 23 – Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. (Ephesians 2:4-5).** These verses remind us what has gone on in our lives. Jesus saved us. Not anything we did. Not anything we said. Not anything we deserved. Now the parable (and really the whole chapter of Matthew 25) reminds us what we should do in response to experiencing his grace - but the works, just doing things, will not get us entrance into eternal peace.