



Matthew 16:27–28

27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. 28 "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Reflection

In any endeavour in life, it's important to know the end goal. Physical training needs to be reminded of the long term health benefits. Daily work needs to be reminded of the larger job and the role that your part is playing in it. Relationships need to be reminded that a long term deep and healthy love flows from the everyday actions and statements that we make. And indeed the life of faith is no different.

In Matthew 16 Jesus has just revealed his identity as the Messiah and he has revealed that following him will not always be easy. There may be external persecution as we take up our cross and there may be inner conflict as we hand over our lives to him. Yet at the conclusion of this teaching, Jesus reminds his disciples of the end game. There will come a time when the

Son of Man will come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. This is the bookend to this section of Jesus teaching that places it all in perspective.

One thing the Bible makes clear, through the words of Jesus, Paul, Peter and John is that there will come a day when God will bring final justice to our creation. From a global perspective this will be a glorious day as the brokenness of our world is fixed, the rebellion against God that has been expressed in selfishness, greed, murder, deception and abuse will be punished and the curse of sin is lifted. Jesus' mission is to ensure that this is a glorious day for us, personally, as we celebrate the new creation and new life God gives us on that

day. Indeed the revelation Jesus has just given to his disciples of his own betrayal, death and resurrection is the very means by which this day can be one of glory for us and not one punishment,

“Whoever loses their life for me, will save it.”

As you read through the New Testament this pattern continues. Every letter begins by reminding its readers of their future hope. The Ephesians are reminded that God’s Spirit within them is a deposit, guaranteeing their inheritance. The Colossians are praised for their faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for them in heaven. Peter writes to the churches reminding them that in Christ they have an inheritance that can never perish, spoil

or fade kept in heaven for them. Before any New Testament writer addresses the daily issues of change, growth and struggle that come with the Christian life, they always begin by reminding their readers of the end game - of God's ultimate plan for this world and their place in it. I take it, they took this approach from Jesus himself.

It's so easy in a world that dares not think of death or the life beyond it to be trapped in headspace that tells us we only have sixty years left, thirty years left, twenty years left. This sort of headspace forces our hearts away from the secure hope of God's eternal kingdom and into a fear that we must gain everything now, in the present. We measure our lives by our bank balance, our personal achievements, the success

of our kids; because if this is all there is then that's all we can find purpose in.

But Jesus' final words in this section of Matthew do something very different. They remind us that there is more to life than what we experience right now. There is an eternal kingdom that he will usher in and that reality is both the compass for our lives and the comfort for our souls.

Interesting in this passage of scripture is Jesus' comment about rewards, that on this final day Jesus will reward each person for what they have done. For many this has been a puzzling verse. The promise in the Scriptures is that our eternal destiny is secured through what Jesus has done in taking our sin, not by what we do in trying to be good enough for God. This is most

certainly true, but the words of Jesus here still ring true. On that final day the question that will be asked of us is whether we accepted God's rescue. Whether we recognised Jesus for who he is and responded to him in faith. For those who have done this, there will most certainly be celebration. For those who have done something else to secure life there will be deep sorrow as the reality of their unforgiven sin becomes clear.

But as someone once said, 'We are saved by grace alone, but grace is never alone'. What was meant by this is that once we experience the love of God and accept the invitation into his kingdom, there is always a shift in our goals, our actions and our desires. We are called to live out God's eternal kingdom now in the pres-

ent through acts of love, through encouraging our brothers and sisters in Christ and sharing the invitation to this kingdom with others; and perhaps there are future rewards for our faithfulness now? There is very little to go off in the Scriptures to clarify this but one thing is for sure, Jesus wants his disciples to know their labour for him is not in vain, for he will return and reward their faith in him.

Jesus final comment in chapter 16 has puzzled scholars.

“Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

History has proved that this was not a ref-

erence to the disciples seeing the second coming of Jesus, for all of them died and with us are now awaiting his return. Some say this is a reference to the disciples witnessing Jesus resurrection and the tangible picture of life beyond death, this fits well, although it's fair to say more than just some of the disciples witnessed the resurrection. Whilst scholars are divided my best bet is that this is a reference to what occurs in the very next chapter of Matthew. As Jesus takes Peter, James and John up a mountain and is transfigured before their eyes and they see the Son of Man in glory. But to explore this more you'll have to listen to tomorrow's devotion.

Regardless of this final verse, the call from Jesus today is to remember the end game.

I heard someone once ask; “How would your life change if you knew you’d live forever?” It sounds like a ridiculous question but it is by no means ridiculous for those who follow Jesus – the ruler and king of all time and space.

Think & Pray

Take some time today to reflect on your view of heaven. Do you really believe it is yours in Christ? And if so how is that shaping your life in the present? Why not use this as a time to pray with thankfulness for God’s gracious invitation? And to ask him to help you see what it means for you to live it out with conviction and joy.