

Read: Matthew 25:31-46

The Sheep and the Goats

Matthew 25:32-34

All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Jason was excited about his new job for the summer. He would be working as a helper at the petting zoo. Working with animals sounded like fun! At the end of each day, he would get to bring different animals out of the big corral and sort them into their own pens. The sheep had to go into their pen, the rabbits needed to be herded into their hutches, and the stubborn goats needed to be sorted, too. Jason found that sometimes it was hard to get all the animals moving in the right direction! But the easy part was figuring out which animal was which. Jason could easily tell the difference between a rabbit and a pig or a sheep and a goat. He knew the animals, so he could sort them.

One of Jesus' jobs when he comes back to earth on judgment day is to sort out the people who believe in him and the people who do not. It will be easy for Jesus to tell the difference. Jesus can tell who loves him and who doesn't, just like a shepherd can tell the difference between sheep and goats. Jesus knows all things. He sees everything we think, say, and do, and he can see the faith in our hearts. Everyone who has faith in Jesus will live forever with him in heaven. But people with no faith in Jesus will go to hell.

So, how will Jesus sort *us*? Will we go to heaven or hell? We know the answer to that! Because Jesus died on the cross to take away our sins, we know that we will live forever with him in heaven! He is our Good Shepherd and we are his sheep. We do not need to worry when Jesus comes back on judgment day. The same Jesus who died to save us will come again to sort us. On the Last Day, he will take all believers to a special place in heaven he's prepared "since the creation of the world."

We don't know what day Jesus will come back to judge all people, but we know what group we will be in! By faith, we will go to heaven! By grace, we are his precious sheep! And until Jesus returns, he will fill us with faith by the power of his Word and will strengthen us to live as his own sheep every day.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for Younger Children

- What will happen on judgment day?
- How do you know that you will go to heaven?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Does the thought of heaven or hell make you feel at all concerned or nervous about judgment day? Why or why not?
- How could people around you know that you believe in Jesus without a word being spoken?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- It's easy for Jesus to tell the difference between 'sheep and goats'. What might we look at to tell if a person is a believer or an unbeliever?
- What would you say to someone who argues that people can be saved through good works?

Closing Prayer:

Lord, it is only by your grace that I am who I am—one of your children, one of your lambs, one of your own. Keep me close to you until the day you return. Amen.

Hymn: CW 442:1,4 – Have No Fear, Little Flock

Have no fear, little flock; Have no fear, little flock,
For the Father has chosen To give you the kingdom;
Have no fear, little flock!

Thankful hearts raise to God; Thankful hearts raise to God,
For he stays close beside you, In all things works with you;
Thankful hearts raise to God!