

The Cross and the Judgment

by John Murray

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living in light of death and judgment, and the hope of the people of God in the final judgment.

Duration: 1:00:26

Scripture: Matthew 25:31-41, Hebrews 9:27-28

Topics: "Cross"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the finality of death and the importance of not wasting the precious opportunities given to us. He refers to the parable of the man who squandered his talent by doing nothing, highlighting the indictment against him for his wickedness and slothfulness. The preacher warns that we cannot redeem lost opportunities or squandered privileges, emphasizing the urgency of taking action now. He also discusses the concept of judgment, stating that God searches the heart and will judge everything with perfect equity, including individual and collective history. The sermon concludes with the glorious prospect of Christ's return and the resurrection of the dead in Christ.

Transcript

O Thou that dwellest on high, glorious, fearful in praises, and doing wonders, before ever Thou hast formed the earth, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God, the same yesterday, today, and forever. We acknowledge unto Thee, O Lord, with thanks the great privilege Thou dost bestow upon us, that we may come into Thy courts, that we may come into that place where Thy name is made known, and where the institutions of Thy grace are observed. Make us, O Lord, deeply of the inestimable grace that Thou hast bestowed upon us, for many prophets, and kings, and righteous men, have desired to see the things that we see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that we hear, but have not heard them.

Thou hast cast our lot in the consummation of the age, and do Thou grant that we, that in this perspective, Thou hast given us the privilege of that revelation, which has been hid from ages and from generations, but which has now been revealed by the appearing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We confess our sin, O Lord, our blindness, the hardness of our sin, the unresponsiveness of our will, and how we miss are the conceptions that we entertain of Thee, the living God. Do Thou cleanse our minds from that corruption, and deliver our hearts from the imaginations of our own evil thoughts, so that we may come into Thy presence with a true realization of Thy great majesty, and bow before Thee in the deep, acknowledging Thee the only true God, and realizing that it is only through the mediation of Thine own Son, our Lord

Jesus, that we may draw near unto Thee.

Do Thou, O Lord, deliver us from the sacrifice which is an abomination in Thy sight, create within us a clean heart, and renew our right spirit within us, so that each one of us may offer unto Thee sacrifices acceptable, well-pleasing unto God through Jesus Christ. Do Thou, O Lord, confront us this night with the reality of Thy deeds, with the reality of Thy judgments, with the reality of the verities Thou hast revealed unto us in Thy Word, so that we may stand in Thy very presence and realize that we are Thy creatures, that to Thee we are responsible, that upon Thee we are dependent for every breath we draw, and enable us, O Lord, in spirit and in truth, to worship Thee in the beauty of holiness. Blessed forever be Thy great and holy name, that it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and we, in all our destitution, would come to that inexhaustible fountain of grace and of truth, out of His fullness, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

We would draw out of His fullness, we would receive grace for great. And do Thou satisfy us, O Lord, with Thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Grant unto us, O Lord, Thy Holy Spirit.

How marvelous it is that we should be able to plead the promise which Thou hast given, that if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto our children, how much more shall the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. And may we, O Lord, know the presence of the Communion, because He glorifies Christ in our understanding, in our hearts, in our wills. O grant that Christ may be precious to us in all the glory that is His, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and enable us, O Lord, to live in this world as those who are the trophies of His redemption.

That we may gird up the loins of our minds, that we may be sober and hope to the end for the grace that is the revelation of Jesus. Constrain our hearts to that commitment unto Jesus Christ in all the extent, in all the length and breadth and depth and height of His love. And do Thou, O Lord, grant not but to all Thy people to the ends of the earth on which measure of Thy grace.

We would remember that Thou hast redeemed to Thyself a people out of every nation and kindred and people and son. And may we realize more and more the preciousness of communion with the Savior, communion with Thy people unto the ends of the earth, and our communion not only with those who are here on earth, but with that great company who have gone to be. May we realize our communion with the Church and enable us in the fellowship of the Body of Christ to have strong consolation.

And let us have that faith as the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. Bless, O Lord, the preaching of the gospel unto the very ends of the earth. May the Word have free course and be glorified, so that it may come in that irresistible power, that mysterious transforming and converting power, so that sinners may be translated from darkness to light in the power of Satan unto God.

To Thou, O Lord, grant that with us this night there may be Thy abundant blessing, so that Thy doctrine may drop as the rain and Thy feast is still as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender pears and the showers upon the grass. Grant us, O Lord, a realization that we are in Thy presence and that it is Thee and Thee alone that we worship, for Jesus' sake. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

It is quite obvious that there is a certain comparison drawn in this text. On the one side is the fact that it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, and on the other side there are the facts that

Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation. And there is a comparison instituted between these two series of facts.

And the truth expressed turns on that comparison. And it is well for us to observe the likeness that there is between the appointment of men to death and the judgment on the one hand, and the offering of Christ when He's appearing again the second on the other. And so there are just these two main considerations in this text.

First, that which is appointed for men, and second, that which pertains to Christ. And so first of all there is that which is appointed for men. And it is appointed for men to die.

Now that is not to without. Enoch was translated that he should not see death. And he was not found because God had translated him.

Those who will be living at the second coming of Christ will not die. They will be changed. But these, of course, are exceptions.

And the general rule for humanity, the general rule of God's providence throughout the whole history of the world, is that it is appointed for men once to die. Now why do men die? Of course it is quite proper to say that men die by natural process. Oftentimes their body is attacked by disease, and that disease is too powerful for their life, and consequently there is a necessity, a physical or a biological necessity, that they should die.

For God has so constituted men that there are certain forces which are too strong for the life which He has given men in this world. And sometimes men, of course, are the victims of assault, and so they are killed. A force that is extraneous to themselves and too powerful for them, as it was where life comes.

But these facts of providence do not explain the reason why. Why is it so arranged in the providence of God that men should die? And the only answer to that question is that death is the wages of sin. The only ultimate reason why men die is that men have sinned.

And because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, since the wages of sin is death, therefore it is appointed for men to die. The emphasis, however, in this particular text, falls upon the fact that it is appointed for men once to die. There is a certain finality attaching to death as death, and it is to that particular fact that our attention is drawn in this text.

There is a finality to death as death, and to the issues that are bound up with death. And there are certain respects in which we may quite profitably reflect upon that fact, that it is appointed for men once to die. And the first respect in which we may think of it is the respect of warning, of unrestricted warning.

When we die, we are not brought back again to this earth to remedy the opportunities that we have neglected or the privileges that we have squandered in this life. We are not able to come back again to redeem the time that we have squandered. There is no work, nor device, nor wisdom, nor knowledge in the grave whether we are going.

And you remember very well how in the Old Testament you have these eloquent words, There is hope of a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. But man dies, and giveth up the tree. Yea, man is wasted.

And it is not for us to waste, as it were, the precious opportunities that are given to us. You remember in that chapter where I read, the man who had received one talent went and hid his Lord's money in the earth. What is the indictment against that particular man? Well, it is just this, that he did nothing.

And you know we don't need to do a great deal in order to squander our opportunities. We just need to do nothing. And you see how eloquent is the indictment that was brought against him by his Lord when he returned.

He said, Thou wicked and lustful servant. Wickedness and slothfulness lie together. And slothfulness is wickedness.

It's the great lesson of that particular parable. And it's the great lesson of this text in respect of warning, that we cannot redeem lost opportunities. We cannot redeem squandered privileges.

Now, now. The second respect in which we may properly think of this truth, that it is appointed unto men once to die, is one of both warning and consolation. There have been men, even in our old time, who have made the earth to tremble.

And some of you remember very well how these men made the earth to tremble. Less than twenty years ago you could hear the voice of Hitler all over the world by radio. And it certainly made the earth to tremble.

We have had other men who in their time, even in our generation, have made the earth to tremble. I saw the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away.

And though he was not, yet I saw him. And he could not be found. And you don't need to be afraid that these boasters are going to return.

And if we are jittery, if we are overcome by undue trepidation with respect to the boasts or the claims of any man, it's just because we forget the appointment of the living God once to die, is warning for the vain boasters. And the third respect in which we may quite properly think of this text is one of unrestricted consolation. And it is one of unrestricted consolation for the people of God.

When they depart this life, they go to be with Christ. And because they go to be with Christ, it is far better. You know, we would quite properly hold our dear faithful friends and believing friends.

It is right for us to pray for them. That's our duty. But when God takes them, we ought to have this comfort that it is because they have gone to be with Christ, that it is far better for them, and we cannot bring them back.

And it would be wrong for us to ask that the Lord would bring them back. They will never be brought back again to the tribulations and the perplexities of this place. They have gone to unalloyed bliss, bliss in the presence of the Savior himself.

And that is the consolation that belongs to us as we are confronted with the death of our departed loved ones. If they are in Christ, they go to be with Christ. And if they are with Christ, they are in the presence of who is the wisdom, who is the glorious redeemer, the great high priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus.

Unrestrained consolation for those who believe. Yes, there is a certain finality, and there is a gravity that is bound up with this finality. A gravity of seriousness that ought to make each one of us ponder what will be our situation.

But after all, death, it isn't the ultimate finality, and it is just because it is not the end, that there is a gravity connected with death. The very finality of death, as death, is bound up with something else, with another finality, and that is that after this, the judgment. Death and judgment are placed together in this particular text.

And because they are placed together in this particular way, there is a great lesson, a great truth. What is it? It is just this, that as far as decisiveness is concerned, there, these are the two determinative, decisive events. In the matter of eternal destiny, there is no decisiveness.

In what will transpire between death and resurrection. There is a finality to death as death. There is a finality to judgment as judgment.

And just because they are placed together, there is no deciding what will transpire between death and resurrection. We overlook this fact, that we are to be judged according to the things done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. Now there is a solemnity attaching to that fact of judgment.

For God will bring everyone into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. There is a great deal that will pass, a great deal that will be considered virtuous and noble before man, and it is simply an abomination in the sight of God. But God searches the heart, and He tries the ways of the children of man.

Man looks on the outward appearance, God looks on the heart. And because He judges according to the secrets of man's heart, His judgment is one of absolute equity. And everything, the whole panorama of human history, the whole panorama of individual history, the whole panorama of collective history, and the whole panorama of world history, will come before God.

Solemnity to the fact of judgment. Oh, there is a grandeur to the fact of God's ultimate and absolute judgment. And it is justice that God will ultimately put everything and everyone in his or her or its proper place.

God is not going to leave anything at loose end. You know when a person leaves an estate, and that person leaves no last will or testament. Everything is, as it were, at loose end.

Sometimes you find that the whole estate is consumed, and the lawyers, everything so sadly left, everything topsy-turvy. And it's very calamitous, even in the individual sphere, in the sphere of family relationships, when people leave things, as it were, at loose end of what God is going to do. There is going to be absolutely nothing left at loose end.

He is going to bring everyone into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. And there is a grandeur to that fact. Everything will be perfectly adjudicated with equity.

Do we live as if there is, do we live as if bygones are better, the past is, do we live that? Well, what folly! What utter folly! May be bygone with us, but God will bring everyone to judgment. Something far worse than its folly to us. It's not simply the folly of living as is, it's the dishonor it does to God.

And do you know this, we live in this world as if death ends it all. It's because we don't believe in the living. Justice and judgment are the habitation of God's throne.

And our realization of that fact is bound up with our belief in the one living and true God. And if we live as if death ended all, it is just because we don't believe in the one living and true God. Justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne.

And for that reason, He will judge the world in righteousness. And if we are imbued with the love of Him, we can really have the love of Him. Because it would be awkward to be no absolute adjudication of everything that transpires.

It's not that God is a God of judgment. He's God who will judge the people. Now in the second place in this text, we have that which pertains to Christ.

He was offered to bear sin. And again we have to ask the question, why? Why was He offered to bear sin? And because of the comparison that there is instituted in this text, between death and judgment on the one hand, and the offering of Christ on the other, we must discover that the same real reason underlies the offering of Christ, as underlies the same reason. The answer to the question, why do men die, and to the question, why is there to be a final judgment, is the answer to the question, why Christ was offered to bear sin.

That may seem very strange, but it is true. What is it? Well, why are men appointed to death? It is just simply because truth must be vindicated and justice must be executed. The wages of sin is death.

The sinner must die. Thus thou art, and to thus thou shalt return. And because that is the case, men must die.

And it is really for that very same reason that Christ, Christ would not have been offered if there had been no sin. If sin did not deserve its wages in death, He would not have died upon the accursed tree. Christ indeed was offered a sacrifice unto death, the death of the cross, just for the very same reason that the claims of justice must be satisfied.

In truth, God had determined the salvation of a countless multitude, and because God had determined the salvation of a countless multitude, justice must be vindicated. His vicarious death. But the answer again falls upon that Christ was once silent.

That's the leading thought in this text. Just as the leading thought in the earlier part of the text is that it is appointed unto men once to die, and then there will be the once for all judgment. So He was once offered to bear the sin.

And just as there is that once for all finality to death as death, just as there is that once for all finality to judgment as judgment, so there is this once for all finality to the offering of Christ once for all upon the cross of Calvary. And what is the great truth? It is justice. It is the truth that belongs to the very center, to the very essence of our holy faith.

And it is justice that He made an end of things, that He finished transgression, that when He had by Himself heard Himself sin, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. He made an end of sin on behalf of His own people. And because He made an end of sin, there is no need for any repetition.

You see, there is a finality, there is a completeness, there is a perfection in the sphere of God's judgment upon sin. He made an end of sin. He exhausted the judgment of God against sin in Himself, with the result that there is no condemnation.

But again, the vicarious sin-bearing of Christ is not the end. It isn't the final. There is something more ultimate in the appointment of God than the once-for-all offering of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the accursed tree.

And it is just because there is this finality and completeness and perfection belonging to the sacrifice of Christ that it is not the ultimate, just for that very reason. And what is this final sacrifice? Well, it is that in the latter part of the 28th verse, He will be seen again the second time without sin for them that look for Him. And it is just the finality, the once-for-all offering, the completeness, the perfection of the sacrifice of Christ that makes so precious, and makes indeed necessary, that final company.

Now, how does that bear upon us? What is the focal point of hope and expectation for the people of God? What, after all, is it that looms highest on the horizon of our hope? You might say, well, it's the death of hope, that my last end might be in my hope. Well, may God grant that for all of us, our last end will be completely off the track of the Christian hope. Do you remember what the apostle Paul says? Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Paul indeed did say that to depart and to be with Christ was far better, that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, yes. But not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon that mortality might be swallowed up of life. For we know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, and house not made with hands, eternal in heaven.

And if it is the death of the righteous that is central and focal in your expectation, my friend, you're off the track of the Christian revelation, and you have imbibed a pagan conception. You are still, you are still, as it were, chained in the thought forms of pagan thought. The liberal self, central and focal in the Christian hope, is the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

And what is it, my friends, that looms highest on our horizon, as we have respect to death, to judgment, and to the one for all offering of the body of Jesus Christ? What is it? It is in that way that we shall test the reality of our Christian faith, as well as the reality of our Christian hope. And what is central in the expectation of the people of God is that Christ will be seen again the second time without sin. Now, with reference to that, there are three things that need to be said.

And the first is this. Our version, perhaps, just slightly obscures that. Appears.

For it isn't the fault of the unseen. And it draws our attention that physical sense, physical sense is given its proper place and weight in the Christian expectation. The finality for the people of God is one that gives full satisfaction to the demands of physical sense experience.

The Scripture doesn't place any disdain upon the human body. God created man at the beginning, body and spirit, body and soul. And death is an abnormality.

A normal state will not again be realized until the body will be resurrected, and until the physical sense experience will be given its full satisfaction in the beholding of Christ himself, come again in his glorious body. I'm just trying to emphasize this, my friends, that the Christian hope is not that pagan hope of etherealized immortality. Just something very concrete, just something very material itself.

In the Christian hope, we will be sane with our physical sense. And don't underestimate that. If we underestimate that, it is just because, again, we are caught in the corals of pagan thought.

The body has its place, its proper place. And redemption will, the body of our humiliation, will be transformed into the likeness of the body of Christ's glory. We shall see him.

We shall see him as he is. We shall see him in the glory of his glorified humanity. And there will be some, just as there was for Thomas, when Jesus said to him after the resurrection, thrust tethy hand and put it into my side, and thus put thy finger into the print of the nail, and be not faithless but believing.

My friends, it's an essential ingredient of the Christian hope that we shall see Jesus in that body that was crucified upon Calvary, the cursed tree, in that body in which he bore our sins and made an end. And the second fact that is brought to our attention in this particular text is that he will be without sin. It is not bearing sin that Christ will come again the second time.

It is not so kindly as it were enveloped in the clouds of humiliation, but he will come in undimmed glory. And there will be no shadow to obscure this glory that is his, who is given authority in heaven and in earth, who is given a name that is his name. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord to the glory.

Of God the Father. And not only that he will not come bearing sin, but he will not come again the second time to load his people with their sins. Don't you see, my friends, that that is the preciousness of the finality and the completeness and the perfection of the once-for-all offering upon Calvary, the cursed tree, that he made an end of sin.

And although he will come to judge, he will not come to load his people. No, he will not. And although there will be judged, although even their sins will be judged, it is not to lay upon them the guilt of burdening them again with the grief that is entailed.

There will be unalloyed joy for the people, my father, in that is the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation. And the third point to be noted in this connection, that it is unto salvation that Jesus, he will be seen again the second time for them that without sin, for them that look for him, unto salvation. And you must note that quite often in this scripture, that word, salvation, is used of the perfection of salvation, the transformation of salvation.

When salvation will be complete, and the body of our very family, and all of the bodies of Christ's glory, we long for that salvation in its completeness, in its thoroughness, in its all-inclusive. When the whole redemption purpose of God will reach its final realization, in the completion of the salvation that was once for all purchased by Christ, when he offered himself, he purged those sins, and sat down in the right hands of the majesty in heaven. But I tell you this, my friends, that although it is the salvation that they long for, it will surpass all the past.

Do you remember in that passage, that most graphic passage, in describing the final judgment, when Christ will come and sit upon the throne of his glory, and when before him will be gathered all the nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left. And martyrdom. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Inherit the kingdom prepared for you.

He will say, But I was hungered, and he gave me food. I was thirsty, and he gave me drink. I was a stranger, and he took me in.

Naked, and he clothed me. I was sick, and he visited me. I was in prison, and he came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungered, and fed thee, or thirsty, and gave thee drink? And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in, or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the king, remember, the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as he hath done it unto one of the least of these my less than two months ago, it was my sad duty to come to these parts of the country to bury our very highly esteemed and beloved friend and your highly esteemed and beloved pastor. Well, it was a painful journey, but I considered it one of the greatest privileges that was accorded to me in this life to pay these last respects of honor and esteem to my dearly beloved friend. I considered it one of the greatest honors that God in his mercy and providence has bestowed upon me in connection.

And I went back to Philadelphia in the next year, and I was studying this. I was reading this particular passage, and I never realized in my life before, as I realized then, how precious and how appropriate to that person to whom we had been. How appropriate.

I never saw them with such appropriateness in my life before. Let me read them to you again, and just think. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come ye, blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

For I was on hunger, and he gave me. I was thirsty, and he gave me drink. I was a stranger, and he took me in.

Naked, and he clothed me. I was sick, and he visited me. I was in prison, and he came unto me.

And you can testify to the reality of that in his particular case. And then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when so we the unhungred and thirsty, or thirsty and gave thee drink, when saw we the stranger, and took thee in, or naked and clothed thee, or when saw we thee sick or in prison, and came unto thee? And the king shall answer, mark it, it is the king, he shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it, unto the one of the least of these minds. And oh, that hath been so magnificently illustrated in our departed friend, the beloved, the humble, and the most of whom he recognized to be the blood purchased.

It was not from the great ones of the earth, but he as it were poured out to them. He did it unto one of the least of these. And let us come back to our theme.

What is it? It is this, that when Christ will come in his undimmed glory, and when he will descend to all those who look for his appearing, that final salvation, it will surpass all their conceptions, all their expectations. And how glorious, my friends, is the prospect, how grand is the assurance that is ministered unto us, that Christ will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Do you like to go to the cemetery? I love to go to the cemetery where I know the people of God are.

I just love to wander among these graves. But because I get a peculiar sensation, a peculiar delight, in recognizing that one day from the trumpets of sound the dead will be raised incorruptible, and those who are living will be changed, and this corruptible will put on incorruption, and this mortal will put on

immortality, and then shall be taught to touch the stain that is written, death is one. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of the self-sin is the law.

But thank the unforgivable Lord, Jesus Christ. Don't live as if death. O God.

Death's folly, but it's worse than folly. It's blind unbelief. It's an assault upon the very foundation of God's government.

It is dishonor to him and myself. Christ's law is a sin. View death itself in its finality.

View judgment itself in the finality that belongs to it. And view the once-for-all offering of Christ in the finality and the perfection and the completeness that belongs to it. For the issue of God's judgment for the people of God is nothing less than this.

And be blessed, O Christ, prepared for you from death. O judgment is a solemn death. It has a grandeur too.

But everything would be out of proportion. Everything would be out of joint. The power of hope.

The appearing of the glory of the great God. And O may I ask Christ and let him just lead with each one of you that you'll be joined to him in the bonds of a faith and of a love and of a hope that can never be dissolved. He will assure you which you look for, which you waited for, which you longed for.

But we'll shall pass all along the way with the glory of the presence of him who has given the name of God in Christ. And we which remain shall be caught up together with them, my friends, to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall the Lord.

Oh, ever blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ in all his glory of the Holy Spirit has so graciously granted to us. May thy word take hold of our hearts.

And Christ shall...

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/0/SID0384.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-murray/the-cross-and-the-judgment/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net