

Created in Christ for Good Works

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Matthew 25:31-40 Translation TR

³¹ When the "**Son of Man**" comes in his **glory**, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on a **throne of his glory**. ³² Before him will be gathered **all the nations** (Dan. 7:1-22), and he will separate them from one another as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

³⁴ Then **the King** will say to those on his right, "Come, **my Father's blessed people**, inherit **the kingdom** prepared for you from the **world's foundation**. ³⁵ For **I was hungry** and you gave me food, **I was thirsty** and you gave me drink, **I was a stranger** and you welcomed me, ³⁶ **I was naked** and you clothed me, **I was sick** and you visited me, **I was in prison** and you came to me."

³⁷ Then **the righteous** will answer him, saying, "**Lord**, when did we see **you** hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see **you** a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see **you** sick or in prison and visit you?"

⁴⁰ And in answer **the King** will say to them, "Truly, I'm telling you, **as much as you did for one of these least, my brothers and sisters, you did for me.**"

Ephesians 2:1-10 Translation TR

¹ At one time **you were dead** through your wrong actions and sins, ² in which **you** used walk all the time, in step with the **present age of this world**, in step with the **ruler of the authority of the air**, that **breath** that's now working within those who refuse trust in God.

³ Among them **we all** once lived our lives, immersed in the desires of **our selves-without-God** (flesh), carrying out the purposes of that **flesh** and the mind's perceptions, and we were, in ourselves, people whose lives played out self-destructive **wrath**, like all the rest.

⁴ But **God**, because he's so **rich in mercy**, because of **his vast love** with which he **loved us**, ⁵ even when **we were all dead** through our wrong actions, **gave life to us** together with the resurrection of the **Anointed King** (Christ). You've been **saved** by a gift of **grace!** ⁶ He both raised us up with him and seated us together in God's own realm that is **in Anointed King Jesus**. ⁷ That was so he could show, in the ages coming on, the immeasurable riches of his gift of **grace**, in **goodness** that he heaps on us **in Anointed King Jesus**.

⁸ For by that gift of **grace** you've been **saved** through **faith**. And this whole reality isn't from you; it's **God's own gift**, ⁹ **not a result of our works**, in order that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For **we're God's work of art**, **created** in Anointed King Jesus **for good works**. God long since prepared these good things to be **the journey we walk through life**.

Daniel 7:13-14

¹³ In a vision at night, I saw one like a Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven. He came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ To him was given sovereign authority and glory and kingship, so that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His authority is an everlasting authority, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.

Genesis 1:27

So God created the human in God's image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Romans 3:20

²⁰ On the basis of works of Law, all living beings will never be counted right before God, because through Law comes clear recognition of sin.

Ephesians 4:11-12

¹¹ The Messiah also gave as gifts the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

¹² to equip God's people for work that is service, for building up the body of the Messiah.

Colossians 1:9-10

⁹ We never cease praying ... that you may be filled with the recognition of God's will, with all wisdom and understanding, empowered by the Spirit, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing, as you bear fruit by every good work and grow in the knowledge of God.

God the Surprising Worker of Grace

Place side by side: *"We're God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus for good works."* And Jesus' portrayal of his judgment on the whole world: *"I was hungry and you gave me...."*

The relation of Faith to Works is often seen as a problem. What gets us to heaven? "Just believe, pray, that's it!" or "Believe, confess, be baptized." or Bap., Confirm., Sacraments. We seek a minimal formula. What do I have to do for God to give me salvation? Enough.

God's work is bigger since the human problem is bigger. In Ephesians, Paul speaks to Gentiles: *"You were dead...."* Your sins were walking with the times, the breath/spirit breathed by everyone. Paul soon shifts to *"we"* – Jews like himself are included. *"We were all dead..."* but didn't know it. Living out wrath of our own choices. God's response is mercy, love.

God did all the work, what no one could imagine, creating life in Jesus for all of us: Grace. We could not have done it by anything we did! God did it! But that love & grace sets the direction of real life for us. As we share Jesus' story, we're newly created for works that embody that good grace and love: Loving God, loving neighbor. God is the doer, the creator. We are the creatures – with purpose. We live his love toward all around us.

Our works are not right beliefs, sacraments. These are God's gifts creating transformation. The good works are the beautiful life of love and service, as God loved and died for us.

The Whole World before Israel's King

Think about Jesus' final teaching in Matthew's Gospel. Jesus draws on the well-known vision of the "Son of Man" receiving the kingdom in Daniel 7. But with some striking differences. In Daniel, nations are marked as empires, fierce beasts: lion, bear, leopard, monster. They threaten, attack God's people, and are ultimately destroyed. The drama is viewed from the top: kings & empires, battles and conquest. Kingdom against kingdom.

Jesus is about to do a "work" beyond all human capacity: Crucifixion, Resurrection. Taking on God's-self all the sin, brokenness, violence, injustice of humanity in order to create Life. As King he sees nations not as fierce beasts but as people – like sheep & goats before their shepherd. What will he do? Destroy the beasts? No. He completes a process he has long been working at. Their king has been among them in *"the least ones"* his *"brothers & sisters."* They've been choosing love or wrath, life or death, all along. He reveals judgment.

In Jesus' work that week, he makes possible what he gives to Gentiles in Ephesus, to Jews like Paul, and to people in New York: Beautiful Life created in Jesus for Good Works.