

MATTHEW 25:31-40

Theme: The love of Jesus

Introduction

Dear Sisters and brothers in Jesus,

The text of Mt 25:31-40 is a parable of the Last Judgment. It is a challenging text, full of surprises and astonishment but also hope and interpellations. Some preachers may use this parable to support the doctrine of salvation through works that the Reformed theology and philosophy don't accept. In this regard, we see this text in the sense of faith that goes hand in hand with the acts to avoid that faith is not a theoretical faith and is even dead. However, this text profoundly touches our daily life and faith in Jesus Christ, the Lord to whom the Church proclaims, preaches, and bears witness. The text tells of Jesus Christ, who became man, acted like a man to set an example to men, and calls us to act like him, learn from him (Mt 11:29), and follow his steps on the path of faith and salvation. Leaving aside this question of salvation, this parable is full of instructions for us Christians today and now. It is a judgment of who we are, what we do, what we have, and how we could serve and use what we received from God when we were still alive.

From this passage, I want to share with you the three main points:

- ☞ *The gospel of Jesus Christ is shared in Word and deed,*
- ☞ Applying faith to advocate and break down the systems, practices, and thinking that underlie discrimination, bias, prejudice, and oppression of people; and
- ☞ To eradicate poverty by our faith.

1. *The gospel of Jesus Christ is shared in Word and deed*

According to Mt 25:31-40, God will not have to ask us all that we would have had as property, all that we would have piled up as riches, or all the human titles that we could have acquired; but a single question that is asked of us suffices: "Did you love your neighbor as yourself and take care of him?" This is the very meaning and content of the gospel. We have an example of Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for us because of love. Following his example, love must guide our life, behavior, and actions.

God is love (1 Jn 4:8), and all that is not love is, therefore, nothing and contradicts his plan of salvation for man. This is illustrated in 1 Cor 13:2: "*When I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, when I have the fullness of faith, a faith that transports mountains, if I have no love, I am*

nothing!" Indeed, charity manifested for others does not go without love. Therefore, if there is charity displayed, that is, aid, almsgiving, etc., it must be based on love.

Thus, this text invites us to question our way of life, acting, and motivations. Believing in God is a good thing, but what good is it if our whole life is in contradiction with his Word and his love? What good is it if we eat without thinking of the hungry brothers and sisters, if we rejoice in our sleep without thinking of the homeless if our children eat three times a day without ever thinking of those who have nothing to eat, who have not even water to drink; who can't go to school? With this, we think of orphans who have no one to take care of them, street children who do not have the certainty of seeing the new day's sun in their daily lives, people who are homeless and without anything to live on, etc.

The text shows us what kind of people in need and daily life we are called to serve: the lonely, the sick, the homeless, the refugees, the elderly, the hungry, the prisoners, the forgotten, and others.

2. Applying faith to advocate and break down the systems, practices, and thinking that underlie discrimination, bias, prejudice, and oppression of people

Today the world is living in an era of drift, social tragedy, and socio-political and economic crisis in such a way that life, which is a sacred gift of God, is threatened with nothing and annihilation. Life is only possible for the only people who own and in the only countries that have the means, while God created the world so that life be everywhere and for all possible. But unfortunately, the topicality of the planet earth is marked by selfishness, social inequalities, socio-political and economic injustices where the monopoly of life belongs to the strongest, the most powerful, the richest, and the poor are like useless, worthless beings. Therefore, to speak of the Church and the Christian life is to talk at the same time of the socio-political and economic context in which the Church and Christians live and act.

3. Eradicating poverty by our faith: working to change laws, policies, plans, and structures in our society that perpetuate the economic exploitation of poor people

One cannot speak of salvation at a time when people are dying of hunger, disease, and endemic poverty. The lack of health care significantly challenges the biblical message of salvation and the Church herself. Therefore, we must rethink salvation, and the Christian message from the Good News of life in abundance as Christ himself desires. We believe that salvation is a matter of spiritual life and a consequence of the quality of life, and it begins here on earth. It is also the total change of mentalities and living conditions.

Thus, the Christian message has its true meaning when the account is taken to improve people's quality of life, especially the most disadvantaged because the salvation offered in Jesus Christ concerns the whole man and every man without distinction and exclusion.

It is by siding with the suffering, the unfortunate, the abandoned, the poor, the neglected, and the dying whom the Church will be able to choose for integral and holistic salvation because this is the strong idea of the message of the gospel and the Church in the sense of the promotion of life and life in abundance for all. Therefore, in every action taken by Christians and the Church, the rise of life, the struggle for this life, and its protection must appear as a sum of all the theories and practices around the Word of God for the well-being of man.

Faith in God and the Christian life must be affirmed by concrete acts promoting human life in all areas and everywhere. So, also, at the time of globalization and current globalization, the message of the gospel and the Church, which must go hand in hand with deeds, must pay special and priority attention to the human life, essential factor, and finality of any process of salvation. Man must therefore be the center of all development, and all action must be centered on the human person created in God's image. Here we clearly understand the very meaning of the Church's commitment in the field of diaconia, education, and the like.

The message in this passage calls us to commit ourselves practically to the cause of the forgotten persons by doing everything in our power to put ourselves in their place and by pleading for all that can contribute to their well-being and the total fulfillment of the whole human being. Jesus shows us that we must develop pastoral support for those infected and affected by the realities and effects of the situation in which we live and that we must not be indifferent in the face of these realities and this situation that overwhelms them. It is, therefore, necessary to act in time and against time because the idea of God is practical, and faith in God is practical and not theoretical.

Conclusion

To conclude, dear brethren, the passage of Mt 25: 31-40 reminds us that we are all called to change this world from selfishness, rejection, and indifference into a world of conviviality and fraternal love in which each has his place, value, and dignity to be the child of God! With this, we leave the logic of myself and me alone to that of you and all of us. Together we leave the world and the life of darkness to the world and the

life of light; we leave a world and a life of marginalization and discrimination towards the world and the life of sharing and fraternal communion, in short, the world of the love of the children of God!

The marginalized and forgotten people of Rwanda and the world need this love, our love, and our commitment to love. They need our gesture to restore life today and tomorrow. And this inheritance of love received from the Lord and receiving and giving every day is also a reality to be built up every day of our lives. Yes, this world lives and evolves by creating «excluded from the banquet of life,» but Jesus invites us today to redo them, to make all those excluded from the «elect, guests of honor, beloved of life.»

This gospel passage shows us a fundamental reality of life: love for others will have the last Word. It also shows that the meaning of following, being a disciple, and the Christian life is to put oneself at others' service. Although Jesus is Master and Lord (Jn 13:13), He places Himself at the turn of those who call Him Master and Lord and cares for their life and well-being. He, therefore, calls us to learn from him. And his promise says to us: «I am with you always until the end of the world» (Mt 28:20). In other words, Christ lives in the life and journey of every Christian who accepts him and makes the journey with us all, whatever our situations, our realities, and our contexts. So, Brethren, Let us accept that Christ lives and acts in us because he wants to manifest himself in us and use us.

The Lord bless you and bless his Word, Amen!

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