

## Sermon for Last Judgment (Series A)

Text: Matthew 25:31-46

Preached on 11-11-2007

### **Introduction:**

One of the best spots for catching good, stern tongue-lashings is on the benches of lower court TV judges. These judges can lay into punks and deadbeats like nobodies business. That may explain the growing success of shows like *Judge Judy* and *Judge Joe Brown*. According to recent polls, TV court shows are more popular than TV talk shows. This has station managers and media buyers scratching their heads in bewilderment, but one popular explanation is that TV court shows provide resolution. Whereas talk shows raise issues, court shows settle them. These judges are tough-talking, no-nonsense dispensers of justice. They have no time for rationalizations. They are intolerant of excuses.

I'm sure that no one here would ever want to stand before a hard-nosed, straight-arrow judge like that. We wouldn't be comfortable. These judges seem to always know when defendants are trying to get away with something or aren't being truthful. Well, think of how much more uncomfortable we will be on the Last Day, when we are all summoned to appear in God's court! On that Day we will have to face the most no-nonsense Judge of them all...

### **Theme: Judge Jesus!**

#### **Part I: His verdicts are just**

#### **Part II: His sentences are eternal**

#### **Part I: His verdicts are just**

Jesus vividly describes our big Day in court by saying, "**When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory**" (v. 31). These words give us our timeframe. Our case in God's courtroom will be called to order when Jesus returns in glory. Yes, Jesus is coming again! He isn't coming as a lowly baby, but as a holy, righteous Judge. When He appears, He will hand down a verdict. He will decide who is guilty and who is innocent. Although this may first appear to be a rather arbitrary decision on Jesus' part, if we look a little closer, we will see that Jesus' verdicts are always just.

But on what basis will Jesus make His judgments? Will He judge us by our looks or nationality? Will He judge us by how we live or by which church we attend? Will He judge us by the kind of job we have or how

successful we are? No! The Bible tells us that there is only one criteria Jesus will use in determining which verdict a person will receive on the Last Day. It is having a child-like trust in Him as Lord and Savior. Those found believing in Jesus Alone for their forgiveness and salvation will receive a “Not Guilty” verdict. Those found trusting in anyone or anything else will receive a “Guilty” verdict. No matter what the verdict, however, every one of them will be just.

**Application:**

Now someone might say, “Wait a minute! Is it fair for God to judge people purely on the basis of whether they believe in His Son or not? What about fine, moral, law-abiding citizens? What about people in the farthest, most remote corners of the world who have never had the opportunity to hear about Jesus? Surely God wouldn’t use such a narrow-minded criteria in judging them.” In order to answer questions like these, we need to keep in mind, not what popular opinion is, but what the Bible says. First of all, God demands that all people, regardless of social standing or geographic location, live a perfect life. He commands everyone, **“Be holy (live a 100% sinless life) because I, the LORD your God, am holy” (Leviticus 19:2)**. Secondly, whoever fails to live up to this *holy* requirement deserves to be punished. The punishment is death and Hell. The fact that, **“All (people) have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)**, makes this verdict (of death and Hell) just!

Yet, even though we have all sinned and deserve only to die and go to Hell, look what God has done! He sent His only Son to live that perfect (holy / sinless) life for us. But just fulfilling God’s *holy* expectation wasn’t enough. Our sins still needed to be paid for. So God took all your sins, all my sins, and all the sins ever committed by every man, woman, and child and “dumped” them onto His perfect, sinless, innocent Son. That meant Jesus had sin on Him. It wasn’t His sin, but that didn’t matter. He still had to die! He died as our perfect substitute. Because of that sacrifice, God now declares us to be, “Not Guilty!” The fact that our sins HAVE BEEN atoned (or paid) for makes this verdict (of forgiveness and salvation) just!

**Transition:**

After a verdict has been reached in a typical courtroom trial, the guilty party can expect some form of punishment. Whether it is a few months, years, or even a lifetime in prison, a specific length of sentence needs to be satisfied. So it will be on the Last Day as we face *Judge Jesus!* Not

only are His verdicts just, but...

**Part II: His sentences are eternal**

Despite what God has done for all people through Christ, there are still going to be people who say, “I don’t need Jesus’ forgiveness. I’m not that bad. I don’t believe that Jesus had to die to pay for my sins.”

These people are taking the most precious gift ever given and spitting it right back in God’s face. In essence they are saying, “Thanks, but no thanks.” That’s where God’s justice comes into play. God responds to the unbeliever by saying, “Well, somebody has to be punished for your sin. If you reject the payment that My Son made for you, then I’m just going to go ahead and punish you.” And that’s exactly what God does.

To those on His left, Jesus will say, “**Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels**” (v. 41). Jesus doesn’t beat around the bush! He says, “*Depart from me.*” With those words Jesus described what Hell really is. Erase all the mental images you have of Hell. Rather than thinking about the fire, brimstone, and burning lakes of sulfur; think of what it would be like to be eternally separated from the LORD. What characteristics do we usually associate with Him? Well, let’s see: There is His patience, mercy, compassion, grace, love, care, protection, healing, blessing, and the list never ends. Imagine an eternity apart from all of those wonderful things; an eternity separated from the LORD and all His goodness! That is a punishment we all deserve and it is eternal.

**Application:**

These days Hell is not a very popular subject. There are a lot of people, and churches for that matter, that outright deny its existence. Others have virtually replaced Hell with an imaginary place called purgatory, where people go after death to be cleansed of their sins so that they can eventually be holy enough to enter Heaven. But the Bible never speaks of such a place. It does speak, however, of a place called Hell. It describes its torments in great detail. The fire there, for example, is described as, “**Unquenchable**” (Matthew 3:12). That means it never goes out. So the suffering that unbelievers endure in Hell is eternal.

In addition to sending unbelievers to Hell on the Last Day, Jesus 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**” (v. 34). Jesus describes our eternity in Heaven as an *inheritance*. If you have been on the receiving end of an

inheritance before, then you know the absolute free nature of that gift. You didn't work for it. You did nothing to deserve it. Yet, it is still yours. How? It was given to you. Why? Someone loved you very much! In the same way, we could neither work for nor do anything to deserve our place in Heaven. Yet, it is still ours. How? It was given to us. Why? The Bible tells us that, **“God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16)**. That's Grace my friends! Out of love God has freely given Heaven to each one of us. For most, if not all of us, we first received this amazing gift at our Baptism. Whether by being baptized as an infant or by hearing the Gospel as an adult, we still possess an inheritance today. And it is eternal.

**Conclusion:**

Before a verdict is reached and the sentence is given in a typical courtroom trial, all kinds of objections are raised. So it will be in God's courtroom on the Last Day. People will say all kinds of things to get off the hook. Some will point to their own good works while others will compare themselves with worse offenders. No matter what objection is raised, however, every one of them will be overruled. *Judge Jesus* won't put up with our excuses or give ear to what kind of good person we were. He will know exactly the kind of person we were. He will have each one of our sins written down, carefully detailed. He is going to call us to account for every, single one of them.

Thankfully, Jesus will be more than our Judge. He will also be our defense attorney. He will intercede on our behalf. He will plead our case. He will remind His Father of the payment He Himself made. After His closing argument, we will await the Judge's final verdict and sentence. Isn't it incredible that our Judge is the very One who will intercede and plead our case for us! That gives us the confidence to know that (1) His verdict of, “Not Guilty” will be just and that (2) our sentence of being with God in Heaven will be eternal. That is why we will be able to comfortably stand before *Judge Jesus* on the Last Day. Amen!