

The Son of God Delivers His Judgments

Matthew 5:1-12

The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany, January 29, 2017

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

When King David died, his son, Solomon, sat on the throne of Israel. He was properly installed as king of Israel according to David's commands. God had promised that He would regard David's descendents as His own sons. Therefore every king of Israel beginning with David was God's son.

Once Solomon is on the throne one of his duties is to begin rendering judgments. Initially Solomon was terrified at the prospect of fulfilling this aspect of his duties. As a result of that fear when the Lord offered him anything he requested Solomon asked for wisdom in administering justice. God granted Solomon's request. He gave Solomon wisdom to administer justice in Israel.

You may be familiar with his most famous case. Two prostitutes came before the king of Israel with a live baby and a dead one. The prostitutes explained that they lived in the same house. One of them claimed that the other one had killed her baby in the night by rolling onto him. She further claimed that the other woman had taken her dead baby in the night and had exchanged it with her own live baby. The woman claimed that when she got up in the morning she was initially frightened because it seemed that her baby was dead, but when she examined the child closely she realized that it was not her baby and upon further investigation she realized that the live baby in the arms of the other woman was really her own.

Once she got done explaining her accusation before the king the other woman simply stood there and denied the whole thing. She claimed that the first woman was the one who had killed her baby in the night and the live baby was actually hers. Since there were no other witnesses in the house to settle the matter the two women argued before the king.

Solomon outlines the evidence as it had been presented and then commands that a sword be taken and that the live baby be cut in half and half given to each woman. When the women heard the command the mother of the dead child agreed with the ruling, but the mother of the live child cried out and said that it would be ok if the other woman could keep the child. When Solomon heard the reactions of the two women he granted the child to the woman who wanted the child alive even if it meant that it grew up with the other woman.

This is how Solomon rendered his judgment. This is his most famous case. It illustrates the wisdom that God gave to him in executing justice in Israel. It illustrates for us what the king of Israel is expected to do. In addition to all of his other duties the king of Israel is supposed to render judgments.

This is exactly what Jesus is doing when He speaks the beatitudes.

Perhaps you already knew that or perhaps you were surprised by that like I was. Perhaps it surprises us that Jesus would render judgments in this fashion because the beatitudes are such beautiful statements. Perhaps it is because we do not think of the beatitudes as judgments. Perhaps it is because we do not recognize that Jesus is our king. And perhaps it is because in the United States we do not recognize any kingly authority outside of the electorate.

Nevertheless Jesus is the Son of God and as the Son of God He is the King of Israel and as the King of Israel it is part of His duties to render judgments. Jesus was born of a virgin. The voice from heaven at His baptism declared that Jesus was His Son. After the Baptism of Jesus He faced the devil who tempted Him repeatedly. Each time the devil tempted Jesus the devil said, "If you are the Son of God..." The devil was demanding proof that Jesus was the Son of God and each time Jesus demonstrated that He

was the Son of God by successfully overcoming the devil's temptation. Since Jesus is the Son of God, He is the king of Israel.

God promised Solomon that if he ever produced an heir to sit on his throne that would keep God's will completely and entire, then God would establish that heir's throne forever and in that moment make Israel an everlasting kingdom. Jesus did keep God's will whole and entire and was keeping it whole and entire when He delivered the beatitudes to us. Therefore He was not speaking merely as the king of ancient kingdom no longer in power today. He was rather speaking as King of the everlasting kingdom. Since we know that Jesus is now raised from the dead, when Jesus spoke the beatitudes He was speaking them as the Lord over the living and the dead.

One of the primary duties of the king of Israel is to render judgments and so Jesus renders judgments. Just like Solomon of old sat on his throne to render judgments so Jesus is seated to render judgments, but since Jesus is the King of the everlasting kingdom and Lord of the living and the dead, He does not sit on a throne to render His judgments. He sits on a mountaintop.

Now hear the judgments and pronouncements of the King:

Blessed are the poor in Spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

It is to be inferred from this that those who are rich in Spirit do not possess the kingdom of heaven. And when our Lord talks about the poor in spirit He means those people whose spirits are poor.

With this information you are wise people. You are able to assess yourselves. If you are poor in spirit, you are blessed. If you are rich in spirit you are not blessed.

Here is the next judgment from the King:

Blessed are those who mourn for they themselves shall be comforted.

It is to be inferred that if a person is not mourning, they shall not be comforted.

You are wise. You are able to assess yourselves. You know whether or not you are mourning. You also know what it is that you are mourning. If you are not mourning, then you will not be comforted. If you are mourning, then you will be comforted, either because Jesus raises the dead or because when He does raise the dead you will see Him.

The third judgment from the King:

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

It can be inferred that if you are not meek, you will not inherit the earth.

To be meek is to be gentle. To be meek is not to make use of all of the power that you have to achieve certain ends. To be meek and gentle is to put in one's mind's eye whether one's neighbor's needs. When our Lord talks about the earth, He means the earth. He is not using symbolic language or a metaphor here. He is talking about the third planet from the sun. He is saying that the meek will inherit the entirety of that planet when He returns in triumph and glory. Those who are not meek or are not gentle will not inherit any of it.

The fourth judgment from the King:

Blessed are the ones who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they themselves will be satisfied.

It can be inferred from this judgment that those who do not hunger or thirst for righteousness will not be satisfied. In order to hunger and thirst for righteousness one must first lack righteousness. If a person already has righteousness, they will not hunger and thirst for it. Secondly, when it comes to

righteousness there are those people who lack righteousness, but it does not bother them that they lack it. People who are not bothered by their lack of righteousness do not hunger and thirst for it. Therefore those who already have righteousness will not be blessed and will not be satisfied. And those who lack righteousness, but have no desire for it either will not be satisfied with righteousness. You are wise. You are able to assess yourselves. You have the pronouncement of the king.

The fifth judgment of the King:

Blessed are the merciful because they themselves will be shown mercy.

It may be inferred that those who do not show mercy will not receive mercy.

When He talks about the merciful He is talking about people who give to others things that those other people do not deserve. When He talks about the merciful He is talking about those people who refuse to give to others what they do deserve when such deserts are judgments that will harm them. You are wise. You are able to assess yourselves. You can determine whether or not you spare people what they deserve when it would mean judgment on them. You can determine whether or not you grant to people what they do not deserve. You can determine therefore whether or not you are blessed. You have the judgments of the King.

The sixth judgment of the King:

Blessed are the peacemakers because they themselves will be called sons of God.

It may be inferred that if you are not a peacemaker then you are not a son of God. And here "son of God" means one who inherits together with Jesus and one who reigns together with Jesus without reference to gender.

Peacemakers are those who work for peace. They work for peace in two primary ways. First, they confess the sins that they have committed against others when they remember that their brother has something against them. They will seek their brother's forgiveness. They will seek peace. Furthermore peacemakers forgive those who have sinned against them. They will hear the confession of their brother and they will forgive him. They will not hold against him or her the things that he or she has done. If the confession of their brother is not forthcoming, a peacemaker will seek it out.

You are wise. With the judgments of the King before you, you are able to determine whether or not you are a peacemaker. And if you are, you are blessed.

The seventh judgment of the King:

Blessed are the pure in heart, because they themselves will see God.

Do not misunderstand this judgment. Pure in heart does not refer to sinlessness. Jesus is not saying that the perfect will see God. Rather the pure in heart are those people without deceit in their heart. A deceitful heart is impure. A deceitful heart is filled with sin, but will not take responsibility for it. In the worst case an impure heart is a heart that will not admit its sins. It will stubbornly continue to believe that it is righteous on its own.

A pure heart has no deceit in it. A pure heart does not lie about its sins. A pure heart does not try to hide from its sins when it is confronted with them. A pure heart confesses its sins before God and when necessary according to its vocation before other people. A pure heart is honest about its situation in front of God.

The ones who are pure in heart will see God. The ones who are not will not see God.

The eighth judgment of the King:

Blessed are the ones who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness because theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

The judge has come full circle. He has gone right around to talking about those people who possess the Kingdom of heaven. At first it was the poor in spirit and now it is those who are persecuted for righteousness sake. Those who are poor in spirit must be the same people who are persecuted for righteousness's sake. If that is the case, then they are not persecuted because of their own righteousness because they are poor in spirit. Therefore they must be persecuted because of the righteousness of the King and his righteous judgments.

He does not say what form the persecutions will take. To the human eye some persecutions are worse than others. To us a beheading because of righteousness is a worse form of persecution than simple ridicule or scorn. However, the King in His judgments makes no such distinctions. It does not matter to Him how you are persecuted. He simply wants you to know that if you are blessed because you are poor in spirit then you will be persecuted for the sake of His righteousness. His righteousness will be upon you and others will hate you for it. How they express their hatred is left to them. Whether or not you are blessed when you are persecuted is up to the King and His judgments.

And so blessed are you when they revile you and persecute you and speak every evil against you on account of Me. Rejoice and be glad because your reward is great in heaven for thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

This is the King. These are His judgments.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.