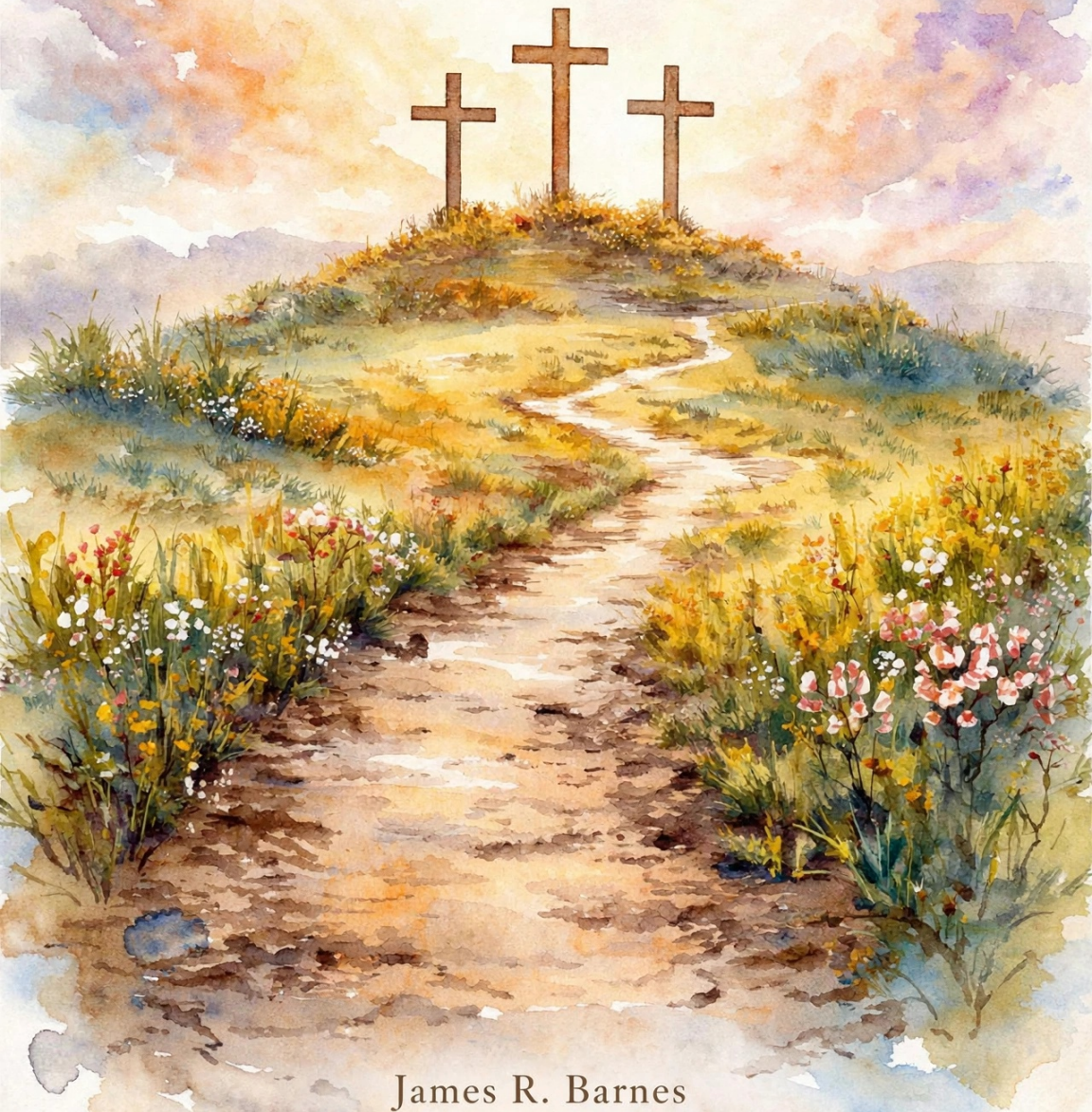


Impartial Grace

The Olivet Discourse Under the Light of Psalm 145:9



James R. Barnes

To

God, Who continues to teach.

— Psalm 145:9 —



Impartial Grace: The Olivet Discourse Under the Light of Psalm 145:9

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The Olivet Discourse
Under the Light of Psalm 145:9

James R. Barnes

INTRODUCTION: MATTHEW 24-25

What Jesus Actually Said About the End



Text: Matthew 24:1-14, 24:14

The end isn't about God leaving. It's about God coming.

If you've ever been confused by Matthew 24, you're not alone. The disciples were confused too.

They were standing in front of the most beautiful building they'd ever seen - the Temple in Jerusalem. White stone, gold roof. They said, "Look at this, Jesus!"

Jesus said, "It's all coming down. Not one stone left on another."

That got their attention. So they walked across the valley to the Mount of Olives and asked, "When? What will be the sign that you're coming back and wrapping this age up?"

Matthew 24 is Jesus' answer. And if we zoom out, the whole chapter is actually pretty simple. He answers in four everyday pictures.

1. First, He Says: Don't Be Fooled. (v. 4-8)

The first danger isn't war or earthquakes. It's being misled.

Jesus says, "Many will come saying 'I am the Christ' and will lead many astray."

Then he lists the headlines we see every day: wars and rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes. He says, "Don't be alarmed. This is not the end. This is the beginning of birth pains."

I like that picture. My wife gave birth to my son. Those early pains were real, but they weren't the end. They meant something new was coming.

Jesus says the shaking we feel is not a dead end. It's a birth canal. God is not destroying. God is delivering.

2. Then He Says: Don't Quit. (v. 9-14)

He gets honest. "You will be hated. Many will fall away. Lawlessness will increase. The love of many will grow cold."

That's not very encouraging. But then he plants a flag in the middle of it:

"But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

Did you catch it? The Gospel will go to *all nations*. Not just to us. Not just to our group. To all.

That's what we mean when we say Yahweh is good to all. God's plan isn't to save a few and ditch the rest. His plan is to get the good news to everyone. The end doesn't come until the invitation has gone everywhere.

If the end was about God abandoning the world, he'd pull the covers off now. But he says, "We keep going. We keep preaching. We keep loving. To all."

3. Then He Says: Don't Panic When The Old System Falls. (v. 15-28)

This part sounds strange to us - "the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place."

For his listeners, it was simple. Daniel had warned that a time would come when something unholy would set itself up in God's house. For Matthew's church, it happened in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed the Temple.

Jesus says, "When you see that, get out. Don't go back for your coat."

Why? Because God was finished with a religion that kept people out. Jesus had already said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." When the Temple system that excluded Gentiles, lepers, and sinners fell, it wasn't God being mean. It was God clearing space for a bigger table.

He doesn't destroy to reject. He deconstructs to include.

He also says, "Don't run after secret messiahs in the desert or in back rooms. When I come, everyone will know it, like lightning from east to west."

In other words: Don't chase hype.

4. Finally, He Says: Get Ready - I'm Coming to Gather, Not to Abandon. (v. 29-35)

"After the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened... and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds... and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds."

Sun, moon, stars shaking - that's Bible language for big change. The old world order shaking.

But what does Jesus actually do when he comes? Does he evacuate the planet?

No. He gathers.

From the four winds. From everywhere. North, south, east, west. That word "elect" - we've made it mean "favorites." In the Bible it means "firstfruits." The first batch of dough

that shows the whole loaf is coming. God starts with some to show he intends to reach all.

Then he says, "Learn from the fig tree. When its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know summer is near."

If God keeps his promise to make one tree bud again - Israel - then he will keep his promise to bring summer for everyone.

He finishes: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

The Temple stones fell. Empires fall. But his word stands. And what is his word? Romans 11:32 tells us plainly: *"God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all."*

That's the whole tour in one sentence: God is not good to some. Yahweh is good to all.

So how do we live while we wait?

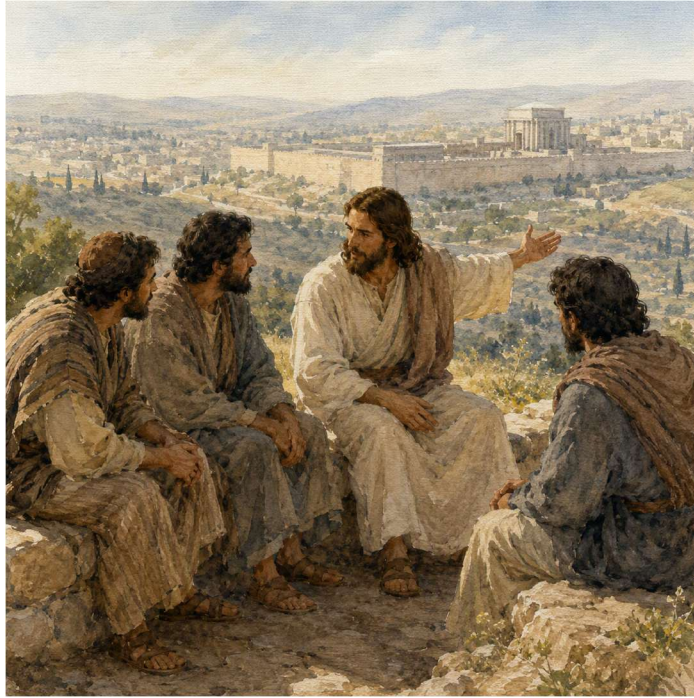
Jesus doesn't give us a timeline. He gives us a job description: Don't be fooled. Don't quit. Don't panic. Be ready to welcome everybody to the table.

For Personal Reflection - Keep it simple:

1. What headline is making you afraid right now - war, money, health? How does it help to see it as a birth pain, not a dead end?
2. Who is one person outside your usual circle that God might want you to show mercy to this week?
3. Do you live like God is abandoning the world, or visiting the world?

SERMON 1: THE QUESTION BEHIND THE QUESTION

Matthew 24:1-3 — "When Will These Things Be?"



The Disciples ask. Jesus explains.

If you only remember one sentence: The end isn't about God abandoning His creation. It's about God visiting it.

The Story:

"Jesus left the temple and was going away..."

Matthew doesn't waste words. That sentence is heavy.

Just before this, in Matthew 23, Jesus looked at Jerusalem and wept and said, *"Your house is left to you desolate."* Now He gets up and walks out. In the Old Testament, when God's glory walked out of the Temple - that's what Ezekiel saw - it meant that house was done.

But the disciples didn't see it that way. They caught up to Him and said, "Look! Look at the buildings!"

And they were something to look at. Herod's Temple was the pride of Israel. White stone so bright you had to squint. Gold on the roof that lit up like fire at sunrise. Some of the foundation stones were 40 feet long. It took 46 years to build.

It was more than a building. It was their security blanket. The thinking went like this: As long as we have the Temple, God is with *us*. If the Temple stands, *we* are safe.

So they were asking from inside a small circle: "What happens to us?"

Have you ever prayed that way? "Lord, what are you going to do for my family, my church, my country?" It's an honest prayer. But it's small.

Jesus answers with a sledgehammer:

"Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will all not be thrown down."

He didn't say it might fall. He said it will fall. And 40 years later, it did. In 70 AD the Romans burned it. The gold on the roof melted down between the stones, so the soldiers pried every stone apart to get the gold. Just like Jesus said.

Why would Jesus start a talk about the end of the world by talking about the end of a building?

Because He had to take down a small hope to make room for a bigger one.

As long as your hope is "God will protect our building, our group, our way of doing things," you'll never see what God is really building.

Then They Ask a Better Question:

They cross the valley to the Mount of Olives. That's the hill that looks straight at the Temple. That's where the prophets said the Messiah would show up. It's a good place to ask a private question.

"Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

Two questions in one.

"When will the Temple fall?" That's still about us.

"And what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?" Now they're thinking bigger.

That phrase "end of the age" - in their Bible there were two ages. This present age, where things are broken, and the age to come, when God makes all things right. They're asking, "When does this broken age end and your age begin?"

Jesus doesn't scold them for asking. He just gently moves the camera.

He moves them from:

What's happening to us? -> What is God doing for all?

You see it in verse 14, the key verse for this whole series: *"And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."*

Not just in Jerusalem. Not just to Jews. Throughout the whole world. To all nations.

That's our phrase for this series - Impartial Grace. *Yahweh is good to all. Psalm 145:9.*

If the end was about God evacuating a few special people off a sinking planet, Jesus would have said, "Hold onto the Temple columns!" But He says the opposite. He leaves the building made with hands to build a family made of people from everywhere.

So What Does This Mean For Us Today?

We still build temples.

It might be a church building. It might be a denomination. It might be a political party. It might be our family name or our bank account. We point at it and say, "Jesus, look at what we've built. Be impressed. Protect this."

And Jesus, in love, says, "That's coming down too."

Not because He's mean. Because He wants something bigger. He doesn't want to just protect *us*. He wants to visit *all*.

The end, according to Jesus, is not abandonment. It's arrival. The word they use for "coming" is *parousia*. It was the word for a king arriving in his city. Not a king running away. A king arriving.

Let's make it personal:

1. What temple are you pointing at?

What are you asking God to protect more than you are asking God to expand? Your comfort? Your tradition? If God let that stone fall, would your faith fall with it?

2. Are you asking "when" to avoid asking "what now"?

The disciples wanted a date on the calendar. Jesus gave them a job on the street. In the next chapters He will never tell them *when*. He will tell them how to live while they wait - don't be fooled, don't quit, feed people, welcome strangers.

3. Do you believe God is leaving or arriving?

If you think God is abandoning this world, you will live scared, clutching stones. If you believe God is visiting this world to heal it, you will live open-handed, pulling up more chairs to the table.

We close this first sermon where Matthew closes his whole Gospel. On another mountain, Jesus says, "*Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*"

Same phrase. *End of the age*. The One who will come at the end is the One who is with us right now.

The question is not whether God will show up. He already has. And He will again. For all.

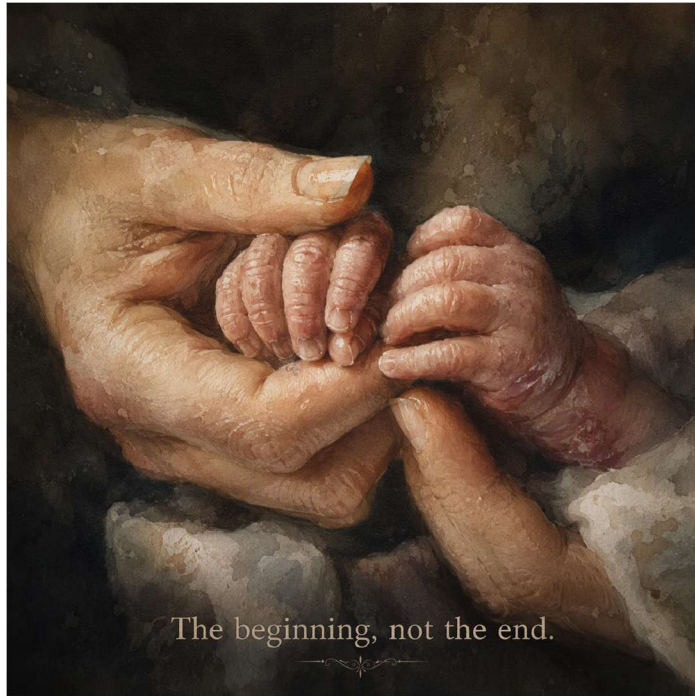
For This Week:

Talk about it at your table:

- Where have you made God's story too small - just about "us"?
- What would change if you really believed Yahweh is good to all?

SERMON 2: BIRTH PANGS, NOT DEAD ENDS

Matthew 24:4-14 — "The Beginning, Not the End"



If you only remember one sentence: What looks like the end is often just the beginning of something new being born.

The Story:

Jesus has just told them the Temple is coming down. You can imagine the silence as they walked to the Mount of Olives.

They're thinking, "If that's true, then the world must be ending. How will we know?"

Jesus starts with a warning we don't expect.

He doesn't start with wars. He doesn't start with earthquakes.

He starts with this:

"See that no one leads you astray."

Verse 4. The first danger in the last days isn't what's happening *out there*. It's being fooled *in here*. Being led astray.

"Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray."

Every generation has them. Someone who says, "I've got the secret. I know the date. Follow me and you'll be safe and you'll be special."

Jesus says don't follow the special-knowledge people. Don't follow the fear people.

Then He does talk about the scary stuff.

"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed... nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places."

We hear that and we think, "That's it! That's the end!"

Jesus says, "No. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains."

I watched my daughter labor with my grandson. Early labor is real pain. It's not fake. But my daughter knew - my wife knew - this pain has a purpose. It's not a dead end. It's a delivery room.

That's the word Jesus uses - *odin*. Birth pangs. Travail.

The world groans not because God has abandoned it, but because God is about to deliver something new.

A lot of end-times teaching says these pains are God finally getting fed up and throwing His creation away. Jesus says the opposite. A mother doesn't have birth pains because she hates the baby. She has them because she loves the baby and the baby is coming.

Then It Gets Personal:

Verses 9-13 get close to home.

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake... And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold."

He's telling the truth about what His church would face. And what we face. People get tired. People betray each other. When everything feels lawless, it's easy for our love to get cold. To get cynical. To pull back and say, "I'm just going to take care of mine."

If you've ever felt your love grow cold, you're not alone. Jesus said it would happen.

But right in the middle of that cold paragraph, He plants two hot coals that won't go out.

Coal #1: "The one who endures to the end will be saved."

We usually read that as a threat: "You better hang on or you won't make it."

But read it through Romans 11:32, which is the backbone of this whole series:

"For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all."

God has consigned all to disobedience. That means He has allowed us all to hit the wall. All of us have failed. All of us have had our love grow cold. All of us.

Why? So that He may have mercy on *all*.

Endurance here isn't us gritting our teeth to impress God. It's God keeping His grip on us while we learn to keep going. The One who endures with us to the end is Jesus Himself. He is the faithful one who endures all the way to the cross, all the way out of the tomb, all the way to the end of the age with us.

He saves not by leaving the cold-hearted behind, but by warming them. By having mercy on all.

Coal #2: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

This is the proof of impartial intent.

If God was partial - if He only liked a few special people - He would say, "This gospel will be preached to My little group, and then the end will come."

He doesn't. He says *whole world. All nations*. In Greek, *holē tē oikoumenē* - the whole inhabited earth. *Panta ta ethnē* - all the ethnicities.

The end doesn't come until the invitation has gone everywhere.

Think about that. The end is not God saying, "I've had enough of this world." The end is God saying, "Has everyone heard that I love them? Has everyone been invited to the table? Okay, now we're ready."

That changes how we live now. We don't hunker down waiting for the escape hatch. We get up and go tell somebody. Because Yahweh is good to all.

So Jesus gives us the whole chapter in four verses:

Don't be fooled. Don't be alarmed. Don't let your love go cold. And don't stop telling everybody.

Birth pangs, not dead ends.

Let's make it personal:

1. Who is leading you astray right now?

Is it a news channel? A preacher on YouTube who knows the exact date? A friend who says "this group is the only one that gets it"? Jesus says, if someone makes you more afraid and more exclusive, it's not Him.

2. Where has your love grown cold?

Be honest. Is it toward your spouse? Your kids? Your neighbor who votes different? People who have hurt the church? Jesus said it would happen. Don't fake it. Ask Him to

warm it back up. He has mercy on all, including you when you're cold.

3. Who is one person from "all nations" you can reach?

It might be the guy at the gas station who doesn't speak English well. It might be your grandkid who thinks church is nonsense. The gospel is for the whole world, and the whole world is right outside your door.

For This Week at Your Table:

Read Matthew 24:4-14 out loud, slow. Then read Romans 11:32 out loud.

Ask: "If God consigned all to disobedience to have mercy on all, who am I still writing off that God hasn't written off?"

SERMON 3: THE ABOMINATION AND THE FLIGHT

Matthew 24:15-28 — "When The Holy Place Is Emptied"



If you only remember one sentence: God doesn't tear things down to push people away. He tears things down to make room for everybody.

The Story:

"So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place... then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."

That's a mouthful. Abomination of desolation. What in the world is Jesus talking about?

He's talking about Daniel. Daniel was a prophet 600 years before Jesus. Daniel said there would come a time when something profane - something abominable - would set itself up right in the place that was supposed to be holy. Something that doesn't belong there would stand where it doesn't belong.

For Daniel, it was a Greek king named Antiochus who put a pagan altar right in the Temple.

For Jesus' listeners, it was about to happen again. In 70 AD, the Romans marched into Jerusalem, put their standards - their eagles, their idols - in the Temple courts, and then burned the whole thing to the ground.

Matthew even adds a little parenthesis - "let the reader understand" - like, "You know what I'm talking about. You can see it coming."

So Jesus says, "When you see that, don't stay and fight for the building. Run. Flee to the mountains. Don't even go back for your coat."

That's strange advice if God was all about protecting that Temple. If the Temple was the center of everything forever, you would say, "Stand and defend it!"

Jesus says, "Let it go."

Why?

Because of what that Temple system had become.

In Jesus' day, the Temple had a court for men, a court for women, a court for Gentiles way out on the edge. If you were a Gentile - not a Jew - you could only go so far. If you were unclean, a leper, a sinner, you couldn't come in at all.

It was a system that excluded. It said, "God is for some, but not for all."

Isaiah had said the opposite. God said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." Jesus quotes that when He cleanses the Temple in Matthew 21. All peoples. Not some peoples.

So when a system that was supposed to welcome all starts to exclude most, it becomes desolate. Empty. Abandoned - not by God, but by its own partiality.

The word "desolation" means emptied, made a wasteland. A holy place that excludes becomes an empty place.

And here's where Impartial Grace flips it:

God doesn't destroy to reject. He deconstructs to include.

Think of an old house. My grandpa had a house where the back porch was rotting and unsafe. He didn't tear off the porch because he hated the family. He tore it off so he could build a bigger deck where all the grandkids could sit.

God let the exclusive system fall so He could build something inclusive.

What did He build? A people. Not a building.

After the Temple fell, where did God's presence go? To His people. Paul says, "You are the temple of the Holy Spirit." Not you individually - you all together. A living temple made of Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, men and women.

That's a house of prayer for all peoples.

Then Jesus warns about fakes:

"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it... For false christs and false prophets will arise..."

When the old system falls, everyone gets nervous and starts chasing secret answers.

"Christ is in the desert! Go out there!"
"Christ is in the inner rooms! Secret meetings!"

Jesus says, "Don't go."

Why? Because His coming isn't secret. It's like lightning. When lightning flashes from east to west, you don't need someone to text you about it. Everybody sees it.

False hope is always secret, exclusive, "only a few of us know." True hope is public, impartial, everybody can see it.

So what does this mean for us?

We all have holy places that have become exclusive.

Maybe it's a church that says, "We welcome everyone," but we really only welcome people who look and vote and act like us.

Maybe it's your own heart. You've got a holy place in there where you've decided, "God could forgive anybody except *that* person."

That holy place becomes desolate. It empties out.

And God, in mercy, will sometimes let that system fall apart. Not to punish you. But to build something bigger that can hold everybody.

He deconstructs to include.

Let's make it personal:

1. What holy place in your life has started to exclude?

Is it your family table? Does everyone really feel welcome? Is it your church? Is there a group of people - a race, a lifestyle, a political party - that you've decided can't come in? That place will become empty unless grace opens it up.

2. Are you fighting for a building God is done with?

Sometimes we fight to keep a program alive, a tradition alive, a hurt alive, when Jesus is saying, "Flee to the mountains. Let it go. I have something bigger." What do you need to let go of this week?

3. Are you chasing lightning in the desert?

Are you chasing secret knowledge, secret prophecies, secret insider information about the end? Jesus says His coming will be clear and impartial. Get back to the simple work of loving all people. That's how you stay ready.

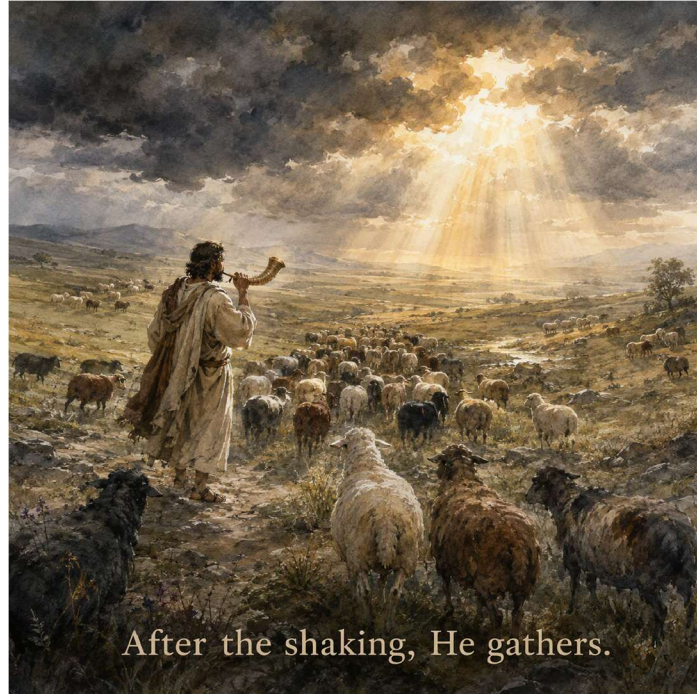
For This Week at Your Table:

Read Isaiah 56:7 - "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." And read Ephesians 2:14 - "He has broken down the dividing wall."

Ask: "Who have we left out on the edge of the court? How do we pull their chair up to the table?"

SERMON 4: AFTER THE TRIBULATION

Matthew 24:29-31 — "He Gathers All"



After the shaking, He gathers.

If you only remember one sentence: After everything shakes, Jesus doesn't scatter. He gathers.

The Story:

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man... and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will

send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

That sounds like the end of the world. Sun dark. Moon out. Stars falling.

And it is the end of *a* world. But not the end of *the* world.

In the Old Testament, when the prophets wanted to talk about a big kingdom or a whole system falling, they used this kind of language. They called it cosmic shaking.

Isaiah said Babylon's fall would be like stars not giving light. Ezekiel said Egypt's Pharaoh falling would be like the sun being covered. It wasn't about astronomy. It was about hierarchy. It was God's way of saying, "The powers that thought they were the sun and moon are coming down."

What are the sun, moon, and stars in Matthew 24?

The old covenant system. The Temple hierarchy. The chief priests who thought they were the sun. The Sanhedrin who thought they were the moon. The scribes who thought they were the stars. The whole arrangement that said, "God is only with us, in this building, through us."

Jesus says that world is going to be shaken. Darkened. Fall.

And it was. In 70 AD it shook and fell. And in every age since, every system that tries to put itself up as the sun - every power that says "we are the light and everybody else is darkness" - gets shaken.

But Jesus doesn't stop at shaking. Look what happens right after the tribulation.

He gathers.

Verse 31 is the most hopeful verse in the whole chapter.

"He will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

A trumpet in the Bible is not a scare tactic. It's a gathering call. In the wilderness, Moses blew the trumpet to gather the people. At Sinai, the trumpet blew to gather **Israel** to meet God.

Now the trumpet blows again. But this time, who does it gather?

His elect. From the four winds.

Four winds means everywhere. North, south, east, west. No corner left out. From one end of heaven to the other. That's total scope. That's impartial.

Now we have to get this word "elect" right, because we've made it mean "favorites."

In the Bible, elect doesn't mean "the few God likes and the rest He doesn't." Elect means "firstfruits."

When you bake bread, you take the first bit of dough and offer it. That first bit shows the whole loaf is coming. It's proof the rest is on the way.

When God chose Israel, He didn't choose them because He disliked everyone else. He chose them to show what He wanted to do for everyone else. *"Through you, all families of the earth shall be blessed,"* He told Abraham.

Same with us in the church. We are not the favorites waiting for everyone else to be thrown away. We are the firstfruits showing that mercy is coming for all.

First to display mercy that will reach all. That's what you wrote, and that's exactly right.

Paul says it straight in Romans 11 - the elect now are to make the rest jealous, not to make them hopeless. And God has consigned all to disobedience that He may have mercy on all. The elect are the first taste of that mercy.

So after the shaking, Jesus doesn't come to scatter. He doesn't come to say, "I told you so" to a broken world.

He sends His angels - His messengers - and gathers.

If the end was about abandonment, He would scatter. Because scattering is what you do when you're done.

Gathering is what you do when you're just getting started.

Think of a rancher after a storm. The wind has blown, the fences are down. What does he do? He doesn't leave the cattle

out there. He rides out to the four winds and gathers them. Every one.

That's our Jesus. After the tribulation. After the shaking. He gathers all.

Let's make it personal:

1. What sun and moon in your life needs to be darkened?

What power have you made too big? Maybe it's a political leader you thought would save us. Maybe it's a church leader you thought could never fall. Maybe it's your own reputation. When those suns go dark, it feels like the end. But Jesus says it's just clearing the sky for the real Sun to rise.

2. Do you see yourself as a favorite or a firstfruit?

Favorites hoard. "We got in, glad we made it, too bad for them." Firstfruits share. "We got a taste, and if God is this good to us, He will be good to all. Come taste." Which are you this week?

3. Who is in your four winds?

North, south, east, west of your life - who feels far from God? That family member who never comes to church? That neighbor who is angry at God? The person you think is too far gone? The trumpet is for them too. The gathering includes them.

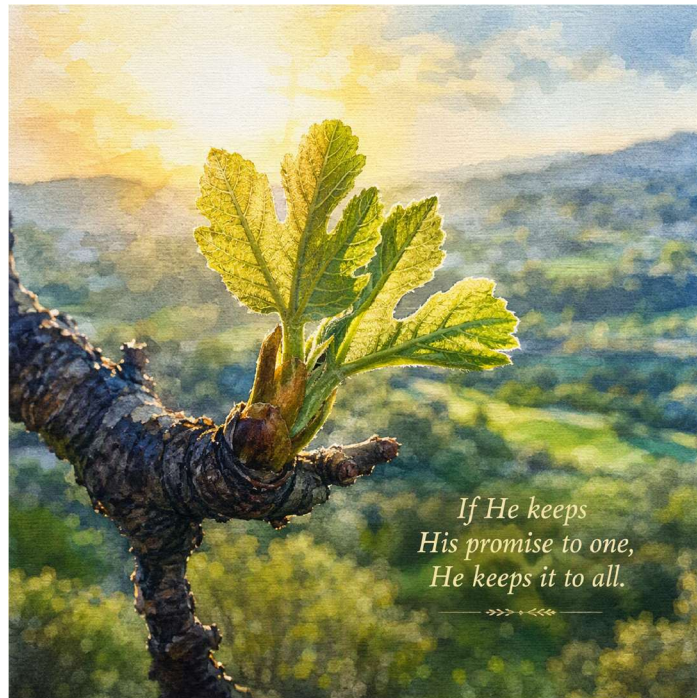
For This Week at Your Table:

Read Matthew 24:29-31 slowly. Then read Deuteronomy 30:4: "If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you."

Ask: "If God gathers from the four winds, who have we decided is too far out to be gathered? Let's pray for them by name."

SERMON 5: THE FIG TREE LESSON

Matthew 24:32-35 — "Summer Is Near For Everyone"



If you only remember one sentence: If God keeps His promise to one, you can count on Him to keep His promise to all.

The Story:

"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these

things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

Jesus loves to teach from a tree.

He's sitting on the Mount of Olives. There are fig trees all over that hill. In **Israel**, the fig tree is like the first sign of spring. In winter it looks dead - just sticks. Then, almost overnight, the branch gets tender, little green leaves pop out. When you see that, you know summer is coming. You can count on it.

Jesus says, "Learn from that tree."

What had they just seen? The Temple system shaking. Wars. The abomination standing where it shouldn't. His disciples must have felt winter. Cold. Bare branches.

Jesus says, "When you see all these things happening - the shaking, the gathering - know that He is near. Right at the door."

Some folks use this to try to figure out dates. "This generation will not pass away..." They argue about what generation He meant. Let's keep it simple like Jesus did.

His first listeners saw all these things. In their generation, in 70 AD, the Temple fell just like He said. The sun and moon of that old system went dark. That was proof: Jesus tells the truth. What He says happens, happens.

But the lesson of the fig tree is bigger than 70 AD. It's about how God keeps promises.

Israel is often pictured as a fig tree in the Old Testament. Jeremiah, Hosea. Sometimes fruitful, sometimes barren. Jesus even cursed a barren fig tree in Matthew 21 because it had leaves but no fruit - like the Temple crowd that looked religious but wouldn't welcome all peoples.

Now He says, "When you see it bud again..."

When you see Israel budding - when you see God keeping His old promises to one people - you can know what?

Summer is near for *everyone*.

That's the heart of this sermon. If God is faithful to one, He will be faithful to all. If He keeps His word to Israel, He will keep His word to the world.

That's how promise works with a God who is good to all. He doesn't keep promises to some to tease the rest. He keeps a promise to one as a down payment that He will keep His promise to all.

Think about it. God promised Abraham, "In you all families of the earth shall be blessed." He kept a promise to one family to bless all families.

He promised David a Son who would reign forever. He kept that promise in Jesus, so that all could have life.

When you see one fig tree bud, you don't say, "Summer is coming only for that tree." You say, "Summer is coming for the whole farm."

Israel's budding is not proof that God has favorites. It's proof that God has a memory. He doesn't forget what He promised. And if He remembers one, He remembers all.

Then He says the most solid thing in the whole chapter:

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

The Temple stones passed away. The sun and moon of that system passed away. Heaven and earth - that's Bible language for the whole old order - will pass away.

But His words won't.

What words? The words He has been speaking for two chapters: That the gospel will go to all nations. That He will gather from the four winds. That God consigned all to disobedience to have mercy on all.

Those words don't pass away. Why? Because they are anchored in who He is.

Yahweh is good to all. That's not a mood He gets in. That's His character. His compassions never fail. If His words

are anchored in a character that is good to all, then His words will never fail for all.

Heaven and earth are shaky. His promise to be merciful to all is not.

So when you feel shaky - when your health shakes, your family shakes, your church shakes - you have something that does not pass away. A Word that says, "Summer is near."

Not just for some. For everyone.

Let's make it personal:

1. Where do you need to see a bud?

Maybe your family feels like winter sticks. Maybe your faith feels dead. Jesus says, look for the tender branch. The smallest green leaf is a promise that summer is coming. Where is God showing you a tiny bud of hope this week?

2. Are you trusting stones or words?

Stones pass away - buildings, savings accounts, reputations, even bodies. Words from Jesus don't. Are you building your peace on something that will pass, or on a promise that won't?

3. Do you believe summer is near for everyone, or just for you?

If God keeps His promise to Israel, He keeps His promise to your prodigal kid, to your angry neighbor, to the person you can't forgive yet. Summer is near for everyone means you can start acting like it. You can start bringing summer to someone else - a little shade, a little water, a little mercy.

For This Week at Your Table:

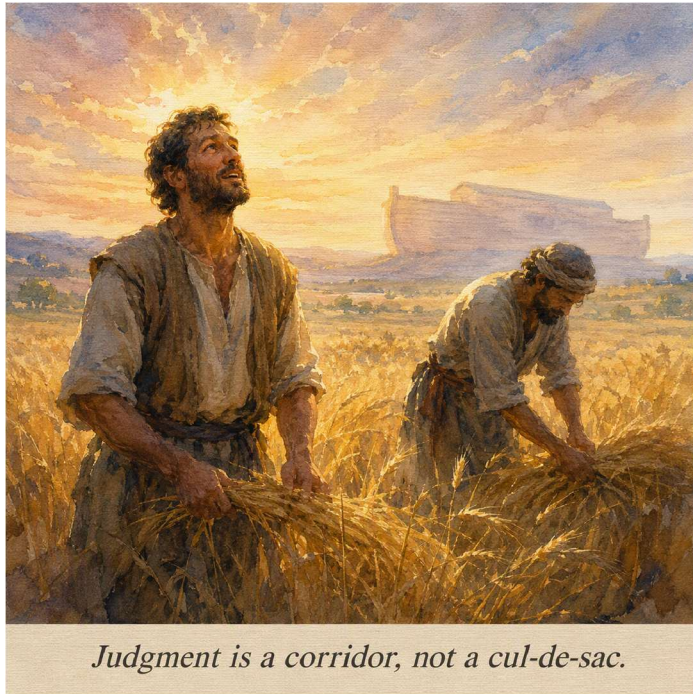
Go outside and find a budding branch, a leaf, any sign of life. Hold it.

Read Matthew 24:32-35 and Psalm 145:9 - "The Lord is good to all."

Ask: "If God keeps His promises to one, who are we praying for that feels forgotten? Let's name them and say, 'Summer is near for you too.'"

SERMON 6: LIKE THE DAYS OF NOAH

Matthew 24:36-44 — "One Taken, One Left — For What Purpose?"



If you only remember one sentence: Judgment isn't a dead-end street. It's a hallway to mercy.

The Story:

"But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were

unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming."

We've all heard a sermon on this that goes like this: "One taken - that means raptured to heaven! One left - left behind to hell! You better be ready!"

But let's ask the simple questions Jesus' first listeners would have asked.

First: Who was taken in the days of Noah?

In Noah's day, who was taken? Who was swept away? It wasn't Noah. Noah was left. Left to inherit a new world. The ones who were taken were the ones the flood took in judgment.

Jesus says, "The flood came and swept *them all away*." Who? The ones who were eating and drinking and not paying attention.

So if "as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man," then being taken is not automatically the good thing. And being left is not automatically the bad thing.

Second: Taken where? To what purpose?

That's the question the partial-reading never asks. It just assumes taken = saved and left = damned. But Jesus doesn't say that.

Let's look at Noah again. All were judged. The flood judged all. But what happened on the other side of that judgment? All were preserved into a next world. God didn't end the world with Noah. He started it over. He gave everybody - Noah's family, which was all humanity - a brand new world.

Peter says Noah's flood was a picture of baptism. The water that judged was also the water that saved. The ark carried all through it.

Judgment is a corridor, not a cul-de-sac.

A cul-de-sac is a dead end. You go in and you never come out. A lot of teaching makes God's judgment a cul-de-sac - you go in and you're done forever.

The Bible makes judgment a corridor. It's real. It's sobering. It sweeps away what shouldn't remain. But you come out the other side into something new.

Think of a farmer cleaning out a barn. He sweeps it all. It looks like destruction if you love the dirt. But he's doing it so he can bring new life in.

If God consigned all to disobedience, Romans 11:32, that all were judged, it was so that He may have mercy on all. All judged. All shown mercy.

So one taken, one left - for what purpose?

To be corrected. To be gathered. To be brought face to face with the mercy they missed.

The flood took all in judgment, and then gave all a new world. The cross took all - "all have sinned" - and then gave all mercy. That's the pattern.

Then Jesus says, "Stay awake."

"Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming."

Traditional teaching makes "stay awake" mean "live in terror that God is partial and might leave you behind."

Impartial Grace says "stay awake" means the opposite: "Live in expectancy of mercy, not terror of partiality."

If you live in terror that God might leave you behind, you will live small, scared, and mean. You'll hoard grace.

If you live in expectancy that God is coming to show mercy to all, you will live open, awake, and kind. You'll share grace.

Jesus tells a little story right after this: If a homeowner knew when a thief was coming, he'd stay awake. Not because the homeowner hates his house, but because he loves his house.

Staying awake isn't about being scared of the dark. It's about loving the house. It's about loving the people in the field and at the mill - the everyday workers - enough to say, "God hasn't given up on any of you."

Keep watch = live like mercy is coming, not like partiality is coming.

Because it is. Mercy is coming.

Let's make it personal:

1. Have you been taught to be afraid of being left behind?

A lot of us were. That fear makes us try to be extra good to earn being taken. But look again at Noah. The ones left inherited the new world. God doesn't leave you to abandon you. If you feel left - left out, left behind by family, left behind by church - maybe God is leaving you right where He can build something new with you.

2. Do you see judgment as a dead end or a hallway?

Is there someone you've decided is in a cul-de-sac with God? "They've gone too far." What if God's judgment on them is not God giving up, but God cleaning out the barn so something new can live there? Can you pray for them as someone being carried through a corridor, not thrown into a dead end?

3. What does it mean to stay awake in mercy?

Staying awake doesn't mean reading charts. It means noticing the person in the field next to you. The woman grinding at the mill - just doing everyday work. Are you awake to the people right next to you who need mercy today?

For This Week at Your Table:

Read Matthew 24:36-44 and then read 1 Peter 3:20-21 - Noah's flood as baptism.

Ask: "If all were judged in Noah's day and all were given a new world, what does that tell us about how God judges? Is it to end us, or to make us new?"

Pray for one person you have been tempted to write off. Pray not "God get them," but "God carry them through."

SERMON 7: THE FAITHFUL SERVANT

Matthew 24:45-51 & 25:1-13 — "Stewards of Impartial Food"



If you only remember one sentence: While we wait, God doesn't ask us to be gatekeepers. He asks us to be food-givers.

The Story:

Jesus has just said, "You don't know the day or the hour. Stay awake." Now He tells us what staying awake looks like when the wait gets long.

He tells two stories.

Story One: The Two Servants (24:45-51)

"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes... But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him..."

Two servants. Same master. Same household. Same job: give food at the proper time.

One does it. While the master is gone, he feeds people.

The other decides the master is taking too long. He gets tired of waiting. So he does two things: he beats his fellow servants, and he eats and drinks with drunkards.

That's what a long wait does if you forget who you are. You get mean and you get selfish. You use your position to beat people down instead of building them up. You eat all the food yourself.

Jesus is talking to us, the church, in the delay.

The master's delay isn't abandonment. In Matthew, delay always means mercy. God delays so more can come in. But if we read delay as "He's not coming, so we can do what we want," we become unfaithful.

What does the faithful servant do? He gives food at the proper time.

Not old food. Not rotten food. Proper time food - what people need right now.

And whose food is it? It's the master's food, not his own. He is a steward. A steward doesn't own the pantry. He just hands out what belongs to the master.

And what is in the master's pantry? If Yahweh is good to all, then the pantry is full of impartial food. Mercy for all. Bread for all.

The unfaithful servant turns the pantry into a weapon. He gatekeeps. "You get food, you don't. You belong, you don't."

The faithful servant throws the pantry doors open.

That's our job in the delay. Not gatekeeping. Feeding.

Story Two: The Ten Virgins (25:1-13)

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps..."

Ten young women, waiting for a wedding. This was their culture - the groom comes at night, you need a lamp to join the procession, to see him, to be part of the party.

Five are wise, five foolish. The difference? Oil.

The groom is delayed - there's that delay again - and they all fall asleep. All ten. Wise and foolish both sleep. That's important. Waiting makes us all tired.

Then at midnight, a shout: "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!"

They wake up, trim their lamps. The foolish ones say, "Give us some of your oil, our lamps are going out."

The wise say, "We can't, there won't be enough for us and you. Go to the dealers and buy for yourselves."

The foolish go to buy, and while they are gone, the groom comes. Those who were ready go in, and the door is shut.

Later the others come saying, "Lord, lord, open to us." He says, "Truly, I say to you, I do not know you."

Hard story. What does it mean?

It doesn't mean God runs out of mercy. It means some things can't be borrowed.

Oil that can't be borrowed - that's a personal encounter with the God who is good to all.

You can't live on your mother's oil. You can't live on your pastor's oil. You can't live on Orchard Ministry's oil. You can't say, "My church is faithful, so I'm good."

You have to meet Him yourself.

The wise virgins didn't have more doctrine. They had oil in the flask - that means a reserve, a hidden supply, a life with

God in secret that sustains you when the delay gets long and dark.

The foolish had lamps - they looked right. They had the outside. But no inner reserve.

And when the moment comes, you can't borrow someone else's encounter at the last minute.

Church's job in the delay is not to sell oil at a high price. It's to tell people where to get oil, and to keep our own lamps burning so we can show the way.

We are stewards of impartial food, and we are carriers of oil that lights up mercy for all.

Let's make it personal:

1. Are you gatekeeping or feeding?

In your family, at work, at church - when you have a little authority, do you use it to beat your fellow servants or to give them food at the proper time? Food could be encouragement, forgiveness, a meal, a listening ear. What food does someone need from you this week, at the proper time - right now?

2. Is your oil borrowed or your own?

Do you have a hidden life with God, or just a public lamp? Borrowed faith runs out when it's dark and late. Personal encounter doesn't. You can't outsource meeting the God who is good to all. Ten minutes alone with Him, honest, no show - that's oil in the flask.

3. What does delay do to you?

When God feels delayed - prayer not answered, prodigal not home yet, world still broken - do you get mean and selfish like the wicked servant, or do you get faithful and generous? Delay is meant to make us more merciful, not more bitter.

For This Week at Your Table:

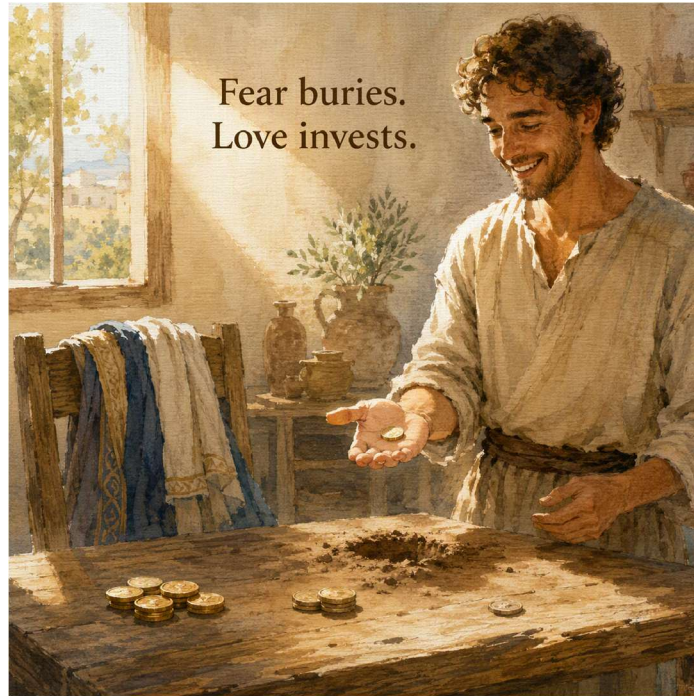
Read Matthew 24:45-25:13 out loud. It's a long read, but read it as one story.

Ask: "What food has God put in our pantry to give away?
And do we each have our own oil, or are we living off each
other's lamps?"

Then share communion - bread as food at the proper
time, oil as the Spirit.

SERMON 8: TALENTS AND THE NATIONS

Matthew 25:14-30 — "Every Talent Will Account"



If you only remember one sentence: Fear makes you bury grace. Love makes you invest it.

The Story:

"For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, each according to his ability. Then he went away..."

A talent in those days wasn't ability. It was money. A lot of money. One talent was about 20 years' wages for a working

man. So five talents is 100 years' wages. This master is rich, and he is generous.

Notice who gets the money: *all* his servants. Not just the best one. All three.

And each according to his ability. He doesn't give five to everybody and shame the one-talent guy. He knows what each can carry. That's impartial, not identical. Impartial distribution means everybody gets something, and it's fitted to them. Impartial expectation means He expects something from everybody.

He goes away. Same delay as the last two stories. Waiting is the theme.

The five-talent servant goes and trades, makes five more. The two-talent servant does the same, makes two more.

The one-talent servant? He digs a hole and buries it.

After a long time the master returns and settles accounts.

To the first two he says the same words, even though one made five and the other made two: "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master."

Same joy. Not more joy for the five-talent guy. Same joy. That's impartial grace. God doesn't measure the amount. He measures faithfulness with what you were given.

Then the one-talent servant comes. Listen to his speech, because this is where we live:

"Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground."

"I knew you to be a hard man." Harsh. Exacting. Partial.

That was his picture of the master. Not generous, but harsh. Not giving, but taking.

And because he believed the master was harsh and partial, he was afraid. And fear made him bury grace.

He projected partiality onto the master.

We do this all the time. If deep down you believe God is a harsh man who reaps where He didn't sow - that God wants to catch you failing, that God is keeping score to punish - you will be afraid. And fear will make you hide.

What did he hide? The grace that was entrusted to him.

A lot of us have buried our talent because we think God is harsh.

We bury our song because we're afraid it won't be perfect. We bury our witness because we're afraid people will laugh. We bury our generosity because we're afraid there won't be enough left for us.

We bury grace because we think God will be mad if we get it wrong.

Fear-based hoarding of grace.

The master answers him hard: "You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown... Then you ought to have invested my money..."

Even his picture of the master was wrong, but even by his own wrong picture he should have done something.

The point isn't that God is harsh. The point is that when you believe God is harsh, you become wicked and slothful - not because you're lazy, but because fear paralyzes you.

Impartial Grace liberates you from that.

If Yahweh is good to all, then the master is not a harsh man. He is a generous man who entrusts property to *all* servants. He doesn't give to humiliate. He gives to include.

When you know the master is good, you don't bury. You invest. You risk. You try. Because even if you only have one talent - even if you feel like the least - your little bit matters, and the joy is the same.

The story ends sobering: "Cast the worthless servant into outer darkness." That's the darkness of living afraid of a generous God. When you live in fear that God is partial and harsh, you live in outer darkness even while you're holding His talent in your hands.

But that darkness isn't the last word for the master who is good to all. Remember Romans 11:32 - He consigned all to disobedience that He may have mercy on all. Even fear gets corrected. Even buried talents get dug up.

What matters today is: Will you dig yours up?

Let's make it personal:

1. What talent have you buried?

God gave you something - all of you, something. Time, money, a story, a skill, mercy you received. Each according to ability. What have you put in the ground because you were afraid? Name it.

2. What do you really believe about the Master?

Be honest. Is He a harsh man in your mind? Does He collect where He didn't plant? Or is He a generous man who entrusts good things to all? Your picture of God determines what you do with grace. If He's good to all, you can be generous too.

3. Who needs you to invest your talent this week?

The faithful servants didn't invest for themselves. They invested for the joy of the master. Who around you needs five minutes of your time, two dollars, one prayer - your one talent put to work?

For This Week at Your Table:

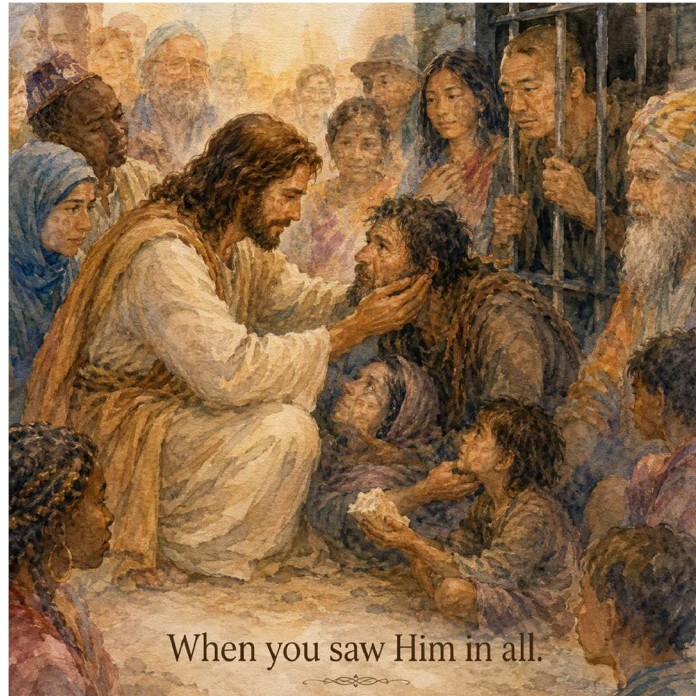
Read Matthew 25:14-30 slowly. Then read 2 Timothy 1:7: "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."

Ask: "What have we buried because we were afraid? Can we dig it up together and use it for someone this week?"

Put a small shovel and a coin on the table as a reminder - dig it up, invest it.

SERMON 9: THE JUDGMENT OF THE SHEEP AND GOATS

Matthew 25:31-46 — "When You Saw Him In All"
— Capstone



If you only remember one sentence: At the end, Jesus won't ask how much doctrine you knew. He'll ask if you saw Him in all people.

The Story:

Jesus started this whole talk by walking out of a Temple that had become exclusive. A house that said, "Some can come in, most must stay out."

Now He ends it by sitting on a throne that is completely inclusive.

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats."

All the nations. *Panta ta ethne*. Every ethnicity. Not just Israel. Not just the church. All.

And what does this King do? He does something no king would ever do.

He identifies Himself with the least.

"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, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me."

The righteous are confused. "When did we see you hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, in prison?"

He answers:

"Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."

This is where Impartial Grace flips the whole Discourse.

For ten chapters, people have read Matthew 24-25 as God getting more and more exclusive - fewer and fewer make it. Jesus says the opposite.

Christ has placed Himself inside every person. Especially the overlooked. The hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the prisoner - those are the ones the Temple system left outside the gate.

Jesus says, "That was Me out there."

If Yahweh is good to all - Psalm 145:9 - then Christ is present to all. To meet any person is to meet a place where Christ is hidden.

At the end, we don't get judged on how well we separated ourselves from people. We get judged on whether we recognized Him in people.

What about the scary words?

You know the verse: "And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Let's do what you asked and look at the actual words, but in plain language.

The phrase "eternal punishment" is *kolasis aionios* in Greek.

Kolasis - in Jesus' day, that word didn't mean revenge torture. Farmers used it for pruning a tree. You cut branches back, not to kill the tree, but to make it fruitful. Parents and teachers used it for correction that aims to make the child better.

Aristotle, a Greek writer, said *kolasis* is what you do for the sake of the one being corrected, to improve them. He contrasted it with *timoria*, which is revenge for the sake of the one punishing.

Matthew chooses *kolasis*. Not revenge. Correction. Pruning.

Aionios - we translate it "eternal," but it literally means "of the age to come." It describes quality more than clock time. Life of the coming age. Correction of the coming age.

So what is this? It's the correction of the coming age. A pruning that belongs to the next age.

How long does it last? Long enough to do its job.

And what is its job? To bring about what Romans 11:32 promises - that God consigned all to disobedience so that He may have mercy on all.

Think of a shepherd separating sheep and goats at night. Why does a shepherd do that? In our western ranches, we think it's to keep them apart forever. In Jesus' country, shepherds separated at night because sheep and goats need different care at night. Goats need to be closer, warmer. Sheep can handle the cold. You separate not to discard, but to shepherd both well.

The King separates not to discard forever, but to shepherd all nations into recognizing Him in every person.

That's the flip.

The judgment is not, "I finally found out you didn't see Me, so I'm done with you forever."

The judgment is, "You didn't see Me in the least. So now I will correct your sight until you do."

The fire at the end is not a torture chamber. It's the fire of finally seeing clearly. It's waking up and realizing that the person you ignored, the person you hated, the person you left hungry - Jesus was in them the whole time. That realization is painful. That's *kolasis*. It prunes.

But pruning leads to fruit. Correction leads to life. And the One on the throne is good to all.

If the elect are firstfruits, not favorites, then this throne is the harvest. The firstfruits learned to see Him in all first. Now all will learn to see Him in all.

Let's make it personal:

1. Where do you not see Him?

Be honest. Who is the hungry person you drive past? The thirsty person who annoys you? The stranger you think doesn't belong? The naked person whose shame you judge? The sick person you avoid? The prisoner you think got what they deserved? Jesus says, "That was Me." Can you ask God to open your eyes this week to see Him in one of those faces?

2. Does your view of judgment make you more merciful or less?

Some views of judgment make us mean. "God's going to fry them, so I will too." If your view of the last judgment makes you less merciful today, it's not Jesus' view. Jesus' judgment makes the sheep ask, "When did we see you?" They didn't even know they were being merciful. They just loved people. That's impartial grace - it makes you more like Him.

3. Is your life headed toward eternal life - life of the age to come?

Aionios life is not just life that never ends. It's life of the next age, lived now. It's seeing Christ in all today. You don't have to wait for the trumpet. You can start living the life of the coming age right now, at your kitchen table, by welcoming the least.

For This Week at Your Table:

Read Matthew 25:31-46 out loud. Slowly. When you get to "I was hungry," pause after each one and name a person you know who is that way.

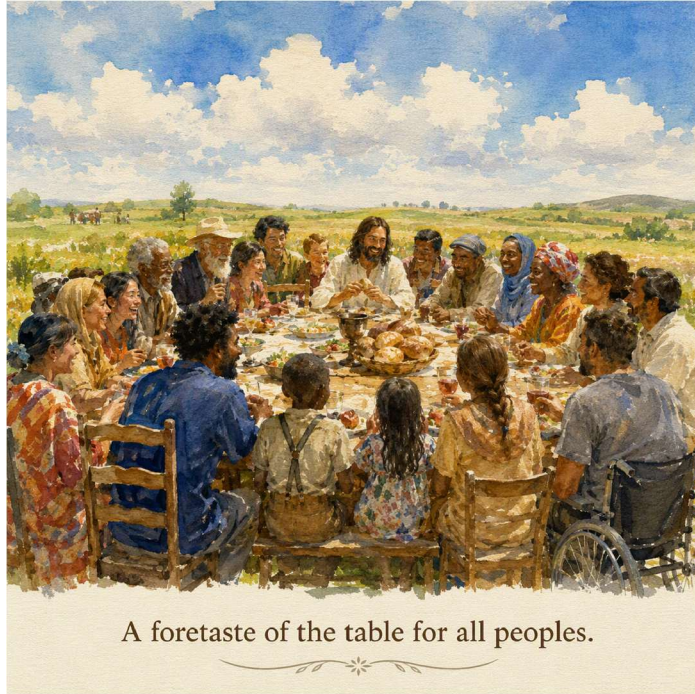
Then read Colossians 1:19-20: "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things..."

Ask: "If Christ is reconciling all things, how can we join Him in seeing and serving Him in all people this week?"

Take communion and as you pass the bread, say, "We saw you in all."

SERMON 10: RESPONSE — HOW THEN SHALL WE LIVE?

*Matthew 25:31-46 lived out — "Yahweh Is Good To
All, So We Will Be Too"*



If you only remember one sentence: We have heard that God is good to all. Now go and be good like Him to all.

The Story:

We started in front of a beautiful building that was coming down. We heard about birth pains, not dead ends. We watched God deconstruct a small table to build a bigger one. We saw Him gather from the four winds. We saw a fig tree

bud and knew summer was near for everyone. We learned judgment is a hallway, not a dead end. We learned our job is not gatekeeping, but feeding. And we learned fear buries grace, but love invests it.

And we ended with a throne where the King says, "I was in all of them. Did you see Me?"

That's the whole Olivet Discourse in one chair: Yahweh is good to all.

So now the question is not, "What will happen at the end?" The question is, "How then shall we live?"

James, Jesus' brother, says it this way: *"My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory."*

No partiality. In our gospel, in our welcome, in our hope.

If God is impartial, His people can't be partial. That's not a suggestion. That's the response.

So what does impartial love look like? Three places.

1. Impartial Love in the Church.

That means no partiality in our welcome.

The early Temple had courts - outer court for Gentiles, then women, then men, then priests. Steps of exclusion.

The church in Matthew 25 has one court - all nations gathered before one throne.

Are we still building courts?

We do when we say, "We welcome everyone, but..." and the but is loud. But you have to clean up first. But you have to vote like us. But you have to have your marriage look like ours.

Jesus says, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." The word for stranger is *xenos* - it's where we get xenophobia. Fear of strangers. Jesus says, "The stranger was Me."

Practically, what does this mean on Sunday?

It means we don't have a VIP section. James said don't give the best seat to the rich man and tell the poor man to sit on the floor.

It means we stop ranking sins. We all like to think our sins are smaller. Impartial love says, "God consigned all to disobedience, that He may have mercy on all." All means all. Your sin, my sin, their sin - all in need of the same mercy.

This week at church, sit by someone you don't usually sit by. Learn a name you don't know. That's impartial love.

2. Impartial Love in the Family and Neighborhood.

That means no partiality in our hope.

We are good at hoping for our kids. We pray for our kids, our grandkids. But impartial hope hopes for all.

Matthew 24:14 says the gospel will be proclaimed to all nations as a testimony. Not as a threat, as a testimony. A testimony is, "Look what God has done."

What if your family table became a testimony that God is good to all?

It means at your kitchen table, you stop telling stories that make your family the heroes and everybody else the villains.

It means you love your enemies. Jesus said that plain in Matthew 5, and He meant it here too. "I was in prison and you came to me." In Jesus' day, people in prison were often your enemies, people who owed you money, people on the other side.

Who is your enemy right now? A family member who hurt you? A neighbor who is difficult? A political opponent you have dehumanized on Facebook?

Yahweh is good to them too.

I'm not saying what they did was right. I'm saying God's goodness is bigger than their wrong, and bigger than your hurt.

Practically, this week, do one impartial act in your family or neighborhood. Not because they earned it. Because God is

good to all. Take food to someone who can't pay you back. Forgive a debt. Write a note to someone who doesn't expect it from you.

That's how you keep watch. Not by reading charts, but by loving like He does.

3. Impartial Love at the Communion Table.

That means no partiality in our gospel.

Communion is where this all lands.

In the old Temple, only the high priest could eat the bread in the holy place, once a year, alone.

At Jesus' table, all eat. Tax collectors, sinners, fishermen, women, doubters.

And what does Communion foretell? Revelation says it best - a table for all peoples. Every tribe, tongue, nation, gathered. Not because they all agreed, but because the Lamb reconciled all things to Himself.

Every time we take communion, we are rehearsing the future. We are saying, "This is what the end looks like. A table. For all."

The bread is not partial. It breaks for all. The cup is not partial. It is poured for all.

So when you come today, don't come as a favorite. Come as a firstfruit. One who gets to taste first so you can tell others, "There's plenty left. Summer is near for everyone."

So how then shall we live?

We started with a question: "When will these things be?"

We end with a different question: "Whom will we love while we wait?"

Answer: All. As He has loved all.

Yahweh is good to all, so we will be too.

Not because we're so good. Because we've been shown mercy. All of us were consigned to disobedience. All of us are being shown mercy.

So go be a steward of impartial food. Keep oil in your flask. Invest your talent. And practice seeing Him in all.

Let's make it personal - Final Response:

1. Will you make a no-partiality vow this week?

Write this down: "By God's grace, I will show no partiality in my gospel, my welcome, my hope." Put it on your fridge.

2. Who will you welcome?

Name one person - in church, family, or enemy list - that you have kept in the outer court. What would it look like to pull their chair up this week?

3. Will you come to the table?

We are going to take communion now. Not as a reward for being good enough, but as a foretaste of the table for all peoples. As you eat, pray, "Lord, make me good to all, as You are good to all."

For This Week and For The Road:

Read Psalm 145, the whole psalm. Every verse says, "The Lord is..." and it's always good, merciful, kind, near to all who call. Let that be your prayer book.

Then every day this week, before you eat any meal - breakfast, lunch, dinner - pause and pray, "Yahweh is good to all, so we will be too. Who needs this goodness today?"

SERMON: PSALM 145 — "YAHWEH IS GOOD TO ALL"

"The Character Behind The Promise"



If you only remember one sentence: You can trust what God does at the end because you know who He is at the beginning — good to all.

The Story:

I want to tell you how old David was when he wrote this. This is Psalm 145, the last psalm with David's name on it. The last one in the whole Psalter that says "Of David."

Scholars think he was old. Real old. The wars were over. The palace was quieter. His son was going to be king.

When you're young, you write psalms about what God does. "God gave me victory." "God got me out of the cave." When you're old, you write about who God is. Because after a lifetime, you realize what matters isn't just what He did for you, but who He is for everybody.

David sits down and writes an alphabet psalm. Each line starts with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet — Aleph, Beth, Gimel — from beginning to end. Like saying, "From A to Z, this is who God is."

And he wants us to hear it every day.

"Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable."

Every day. Not just Sunday morning. Not just when things go well. Every day.

Why every day? Because His greatness doesn't take a day off. And because His greatness is unsearchable — you can't put a fence around it. You can't say, "I've figured God out. He's this big and no bigger."

Small gods are partial. A little tribal god can only love a little tribe. A great God — an unsearchable God — is big enough for all.

If you're worshiping a small, partial God who only loves people who look and think and vote like you, you will live small and partial. If you worship a great, unsearchable God, you can start to be good to all, like He is.

Then David says, tell the story.

"One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts. On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness. They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness."

He says it three times: Tell it. Speak it. Pour it forth.

Goodness has to be told. Not hoarded.

He calls it "abundant goodness" — in Hebrew, *rav tov*. Much goodness. Overflowing goodness. My grandma making biscuits. She never made just six biscuits for six people. She made a pan full. Enough for the kids and the neighbors and the dog under the table. Abundant.

If God were partial, His goodness would be scarce. Just enough for a few special ones, better not waste it. But David says God's goodness is abundant. There is enough for all. That's why Jesus could say in Matthew 24:14 that the gospel would be preached to all nations as a testimony — because there is enough goodness to go around.

What generation is hearing about God's abundant goodness from you? Your kids? Your grandkids? Your neighbor? Don't just tell them doctrine. Tell them a story of when God was good to you when you didn't deserve it. That's how goodness travels.

Now we come to the heart. The hinge of the whole psalm. Verses 8 and 9. If you forget everything else, remember this:

"The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made."

David is quoting the most important sentence in the Old Testament. When Moses asked to see God's glory on Mount Sinai, God passed by and shouted His own name: "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."

That's God's name tag. Gracious. Merciful. Slow to anger.

But David adds something Moses didn't say. A little phrase that changes everything: "The Lord is good to *all*."

Good to all. And His mercy is over all that He has made.

If He made it, His mercy is over it.

Not under it. Over it. Covering it. Like a hen over chicks.
Like a blanket.

That means the person you think is too far gone — mercy is over him.

The family member who hurt you — mercy is over her.
The part of creation that groans — mercy is over it.
You, on your worst day — mercy is over you.

This is where Romans 11:32 comes from. Paul didn't invent it. David sang it. "God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all." Same all. First all judged, second all shown mercy. Because Yahweh is good to all.

You can't read Matthew 24-25 right unless you read it through Psalm 145:9. Without it, the end times looks like God finally getting fed up. With it, the end looks like God finally showing mercy to all, like He promised.

If God is good to all, then His end will be good for all.

David keeps going, and it gets more practical:

"Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The Lord upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing."

Listen to the alls. All who are falling. All who are bowed down. All look to you. Every living thing.

This is Jesus on the throne in Matthew 25. The King who doesn't kick people when they're down. He lifts. He upholds all who are falling. He raises up all who are bowed down.

Some teaching says judgment is God pushing down. David says God upholds in judgment. He lifts while He corrects.

"The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season." That is exactly what the faithful servant does in Matthew 24:45 — give them their food at the proper time. We learn to feed because He feeds.

"You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing."

Not a closed fist. An open hand.

At the end, will God have a closed fist or an open hand? David says open hand. Jesus says open hand. The cross says open hand — arms open, hands open.

An open hand satisfies every living thing. A closed fist satisfies no one.

If your view of God at the end is a closed fist, you will live with a closed fist now. If your view of God at the end is an open hand, you will start to open yours.

Then David lands the plane where he took off:

"The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desire of those who fear him... The Lord watches over all who love him... My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever."

It started with "Every day I will bless you." One old man, praising every day.

It ends with "Let *all flesh* bless his holy name forever and ever." One man's daily praise becomes every creature's eternal praise.

That's the movement of the whole Bible. From one to all. From Abraham to all families of the earth. From **Israel** to all nations. From David to all flesh.

From the Temple falling to all nations gathered.

That's Impartial Grace. From one to all. Because Yahweh is good to all.

So How Then Shall We Live Psalm 145?

We started this series asking, "When will these things be?" Psalm 145 answers, "Every day. Forever and ever. And let all flesh bless His name forever and ever."

How then shall we live?

1. Praise Him Every Day (v.2)

Not just when you feel like it. David says every day. That is how you stay awake in Matthew 24. You praise every day.

Tomorrow morning, before the news, before your coffee is even good, say out loud: "Lord, you are good to all, and your mercy is over all you have made. Be good to all through me today."

Every day. That's oil in your flask.

2. Tell One Story of His Abundant Goodness (v.4-7)

One generation to another. Who needs to hear it?

Your kid who thinks God is harsh — tell him when God was gracious to you. Your neighbor who thinks God is slow to forgive — tell her when God was slow to anger with you. Your own heart that thinks there's not enough goodness — pour forth the fame of abundant goodness.

Don't preach at them. Tell a story. "Let me tell you what God did..."

3. Open Your Hand (v.16)

You can't sing "You open your hand" on Sunday and live with a closed fist on Monday.

An open hand gives food at the proper time. An open hand welcomes the stranger. An open hand lifts the fallen.

This week, open your hand literally.

Give food to someone who can't pay you back — that's Matthew 25.

Forgive someone who doesn't deserve it — that's gracious and merciful.

Be slow to anger with someone who is testing you — that's slow to anger.

That is how we become good to all, because Yahweh is good to all.

For This Week at Your Table:

Read Psalm 145 out loud, the whole psalm, every day this week. It's only 21 verses. Let it be your morning prayer.

Then before every meal — breakfast, lunch, dinner — pray verse 15-16, the old Jewish table prayer: "The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing."

As you eat, ask: "Who is 'all' that we can open our hand to today?"

Communion as Foretaste:

When we come to this table, we are living Psalm 145. Eyes of all look to Him. He opens His hand. Bread for all. Cup for all.

Not for some. For all.

This is not the end of the story. This is the foretaste. The table for all peoples is coming, and this little table is the down payment.

So come. Not as favorites, but as firstfruits. Tasting first so we can tell all flesh, "Come bless His holy name forever and ever."