When Love Wears a Crown

Matthew 25:31–46 • Rev. Cheryl Farr • November 22, 2026

Sermon Theme

Christ reigns as King by identifying Himself with the hungry, thirsty, stranger, sick, imprisoned, and vulnerable, calling His people to mercy that becomes visible.

Big Idea

Jesus describes a coming judgment in which the King recognizes acts of mercy shown to people in need. His words remind us that salvation is God's gift of grace, and that grace changes the way we see and treat others. Faith becomes visible through love.

What the Passage Shows Us

Jesus tells His disciples that the Son of Man will return in glory and gather the nations before Him. He separates people as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. Those welcomed into the kingdom had fed the hungry, welcomed strangers, cared for the sick, and visited prisoners. The King says that what they did for the least of His brothers and sisters, they did for Him.

Both groups are surprised. The righteous had not been keeping score, and those who failed to help had not recognized Christ in the people they neglected. Jesus shows how seriously He takes both compassion and indifference.

A Crown Unlike Any Other

Earthly rulers often display their authority through wealth, status, and power. Jesus describes the glory of His coming kingdom, then turns our attention to people with little influence. The One who rules over all creation identifies Himself with those who may be hungry, lonely, suffering, or forgotten.

The same Jesus who will return in glory once wore a crown of thorns. He understands rejection and suffering. His kingship is revealed through a love willing to give itself for others.

Grace That Becomes Visible

Our good deeds do not purchase salvation. We are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. But that grace is meant to change us. As the Holy Spirit works in our hearts, we become more willing to notice and respond to the needs around us.

John Wesley taught that holiness involves loving God and loving our neighbors. Prayer, worship, Scripture, and Holy Communion strengthen a faith that should also take shape through works of mercy. Caring for the poor, sick, imprisoned, and forgotten belongs to the Christian life.

What the Numbers Cannot Measure

Churches need to care responsibly for attendance, finances, buildings, and ministries. Those things matter, but they cannot tell the whole story of faithfulness. A hospital visit, a meal delivered quietly, or a prisoner reminded of God's love may never appear on a report. Christ still sees it.

The Church's calling is not simply to stay busy or appear successful. We are called to make the love of Christ visible among the people God places in our care.

Mercy with Wisdom and Truth

Love does not require us to ignore wrongdoing, avoid difficult conversations, or give up healthy boundaries. We can speak the truth, expect accountability, and still refuse to treat another person as disposable. Grace teaches us to be both honest and compassionate.

Thanksgiving with Room at the Table

Thanksgiving invites us to be grateful for what God has provided. Jesus encourages us to let gratitude move beyond words. We can give thanks for food and remember those who are hungry, appreciate our homes and welcome someone who feels alone, or remember the care we have received and offer it to someone else.

We cannot meet every need, but we can respond to the person before us. A phone call, a visit, a shared meal, or a listening ear can become a simple expression of Christ's love.

Key Truths

- Jesus reigns with both glory and compassion.
- The King notices people whom the world may overlook.
- Good works do not earn salvation; they reveal grace at work.
- Faithfulness is greater than what attendance or finances can measure.
- Love can tell the truth and maintain healthy boundaries.
- Thanksgiving becomes visible when gratitude makes room for others.

Questions for Reflection

1. Whom have I stopped noticing because life has become busy or difficult?
2. How does knowing that Jesus identifies with the vulnerable change my response to them?
3. Where have I seen the quiet mercy of Christ in our congregation?
4. How can I practice compassion without setting aside truth or necessary boundaries?
5. Who could I make room for this Thanksgiving week?
6. What one act of mercy can I offer before next Sunday?

Takeaway

Matthew 25:31–46 asks whether the grace we have received is becoming visible in our lives. Jesus is the King who judges with righteousness and the Savior who has given Himself for us. His love opens our eyes to the hungry, the lonely, the sick, and the forgotten. We serve because He first loved us.

This Thanksgiving, may our gratitude become hospitality, our prayers become compassion, and our faith become love that someone else can see.

Key Verse

"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."
Matthew 25:40 (NIV)