

Last Sunday of the church year

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. ² Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, ³ because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

⁶ Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰ **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.**

This is the word of the Lord Thanks be to God

Have you got any rewards cards – Hairdresser, Steamers. Coles, Auto-pro the more you buy the more reward you get.

I'm going to have a crack at one of the hardest teachings in the bible for me – the rewards system.

Why?

Because it's in our readings today – We could have swapped the readings, but we haven't – it's written and I always supposed if it's written it's written for our blessing.

Here is the text: ***For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*** Rom 10:5

Last week, easy peasy: we are judge already we do not face judgment. Our judgment began on the cross when Jesus took all our sins away.

Last weeks text:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. They do not come into judgment but have [already] passed from death to life” John 5:24

But this week – our salvation is secure but there's a judgment based on our works – which gets us rewards in heaven.

And God's word is full of this reward system:

Matthew 5:12

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 6:19-21

Don't store treasures for yourselves here on earth where moths and rust will destroy them and thieves can break in and steal them. But store your treasures in heaven where they cannot be destroyed by moths or rust and where thieves cannot break in and steal them.

Luke 6:35

Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High...

There are dozens of text like these – not least Jesus sermon, the Beatitudes.

He said:

³ *"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

⁴ *Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.*

⁵ *Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.*

⁶ *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.*

⁷ *Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.*

⁸ *Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.*

⁹ *Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.*

¹⁰ *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

¹¹ *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

It's a fact – our good works equal rewards in heaven.

That's hard to roll of the tongue – *we are saved by grace, though faith, this is a gift, not through works lest anyone boasts.*

This is our life, our mantra.

This is our grace – personal rewards seem to be an affront to God free grace.

Isn't salvation through Jesus reward enough?

Isn't being at the right hand of God with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, forever, in joy enough reward?

Why should there be any rewards for anything that we do when we know Jesus has done everything, even death on a cross, for our salvation?

Last week (Romans 10:8)- *if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Nothing but the blood of Jesus we sing.

While we believe our works have nothing to do with our salvation, **we must know today** that our works have everything to do with our reward in heaven once we get there.

This is so clear from the Scripture.

John 9:4-5

We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

The issue is not Salvation, I'm sure we have that sorted.

The issues is reward – we seem so underserving.

Heaven is a place where rewards are distributed in accordance with what we do here on earth.

We don't go into this space very often, do we?

Immediately, I'm thinking "Ok I'm saved through Jesus but she's going to get more rewards in heaven than me?"

She's a goody, goody.

And it's going to happen on that illusive Judgment day – when we won't be judge for salvation – that's a gift of Jesus', but somehow we will be judged for our rewards in heaven.

These rewards will show the justice of God.

Hebrews 6:9-12

For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.

These rewards will fulfill the natural cycle of sowing, sowing and reaping.

Galatians 6:6-10

God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Our works are not in vain – God will honour them:

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

This won't go away.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.

But Jesus carefully reminds us that if our good works are for self-praise then forget it.

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

So when you give to the needy, you don't need trumpet sounds

When you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret.

And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Of course Jesus parables are full of this rewards system:

(Matthew 25:14–30),

You know the one about the talents?

Some servants were given some money.

One got 5 talents. One got 2 talents. And one got 1 talent.

The one who got five talents doubled his money.

The one who got 2 talents doubled his money as well.

The one who got one talent went and buried the boss's money for safe keeping so he made no money on his talent.

You know how it goes. When the boss returned, he rewarded the faithful servants saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"

The unfaithful was thrown into outer darkness, "where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Here is the thing: any reward we earn in heaven means only one thing; **They're a reflection of our love and appreciation for Jesus dying for us** on a miserable cross.

Rewards reveal our depth and love in Jesus – not Jesus depth and love for us.

They carry the weight and meaning of our relationship with God, and because they remind us of what He did through us on earth.

Back to those questions:

- Isn't salvation through Jesus' reward enough?
- Isn't being at the right hand of God with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, in joy enough reward.
- Why do we need rewards?

There won't be any **reward envy** in heaven.

Maybe it would be like the Olympics every person there is an Olympian even Raygun.

Some receive Gold, some silver, and some bronze, others receive the honour of representing their country, others doing their best, their PB is their reward above and beyond gold – but they're all at the games – they're all Olympians.

I believe this reward system brings even greater rewards, that we can imagine here on earth.

Maybe, just maybe, these rewards spurs us on to do our best, and to love our neighbour.

If our works brings a soul to heaven – maybe this rewards thing system is not so bad after all.

Jesus says even giving a glass of water to a thirsty one is worthy of a reward.

Imagine if we, all certain of our salvation in Christ alone by grace alone, were encouraged to love our neighbour on top of that, what a good and pleasant place it will be.

It's a thing.

The best thing we can do with it is let our love and devotion and good works benefit our neighbour.

By this they will know we are Jesus disciples.

That seems to be the point. Amen

Jesus our salvation earned by your journey to the cross seems all the reward we ever need – but you have more for us – we thank you I Jesus name. AMEN