Stories That Connect

Matthew 25:31-46

Matthew 7.16-20—By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit . . . Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Matthew 25:31-46— When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

"They [the Pharisees] say that all souls are imperishable, but that the souls of good men only pass into other bodies while the souls of evil men are subject to eternal punishment*. (Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Vol. II, Chapter 8, Paragraph 14.)

Aidious: "Pertaining to an unlimited duration of time." (Louw and Nida's Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains)

Timoria: "to punish, with the implication of causing people to suffer what they deserve." (Louw and Nida's Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains) "penal and has reference to the satisfaction of him who inflicts." (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament)

"But the most progressive Jews in Palestine were the Pharisees [of the school of Hillel], who developed some of the most inclusive and advanced spiritualities of the Jewish Axial Age . . . The Golden Rule, compassion, and loving-kindness were central to this new Judaism; by the time the temple had been destroyed, some of the Pharisees already understood that they did not need a temple to worship God, as this Talmudic story makes clear:
It happened that R. Johanan ben Zakkai went out from Jerusalem, and R. Joshua followed him and saw the burnt ruins of the Temple and he said: 'Woe is it that the place, where the sins of Israel find atonement, is laid waste.' Then said R. Johanan, "Grieve not, we have an atonement equal to the Temple, the doing of loving deeds, as it is said, 'I desire love and not sacrifice.'"
Kindness was the key to the future; Jews must turn away from the violence and divisiveness of the war years and create a united community with "one body and one soul." When the community was integrated in love and mutual respect, God was with them, but when they quarreled with one another, he [sic] returned to heaven, where the angels chanted with "one voice and one melody." When two or three Jews sat and studied harmoniously together, the divine presence sat in their midst. Rabbi Akiba, who was killed by the Romans in 132 CE, taught that the commandment "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" was "the great principle of the Torah." To show disrespect to any human being who had been created in God's image was seen by the rabbis as a denial of God himself and tantamount to atheism. Murder was a sacrilege: "Scripture instructs us that whatsoever sheds human blood is regarded as if he had diminished the divine image." God had created only one man at the beginning of time to teach us that destroying only one human life was equivalent to annihilating the entire world, while to save a life redeemed the whole of humanity. To humiliate anybody—even a slave or a non-Jew—was equivalent to murder, a sacrilegious defacing of God's image. To spread a scandalous, lying story about another person was to deny the existence of God. Religion was inseparable from the practice of habitual respect to all other human beings. You could not worship God unless you practiced the Golden Rule and honored your fellow humans, whoever they were."
(Armstrong, Karen; The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions, Kindle Locations 7507-7540).

"I know this to be true: The world doesn't get great unless we all get better. If there is such a thing as salvation, then we are not saved until everyone is saved; our dignity and liberation are bound together." Jacqui Lewis, Fierce Love, p. 14

Matthew 25.45-46—"He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' Then they will go away to eternal punishment**, but the righteous to eternal life."

"It is better not to promise than not to give prompt assistance, for no blame follows in the former case, but in the latter there is dissatisfaction from the weaker class, and a deep hatred and eternal chastisement [aionion kolasis] from such as are more powerful." (Philo, Fragments)

Aionion: "indeterminate as to duration." (Mounce's Concise Greek English Dictionary of the New Testament); "gives prominence to the immeasurableness of eternity." (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament)

[It's not that it lasts forever, but that linear time is not a constriction. It doesn't matter if it takes forever for whatever this adjective is describing to accomplish its purpose.]

Kolasis: "The noted definition of Aristotle, which distinguishes kolasis from timoria is that kolasis is disciplinary and has reference to him who suffers, while the latter timoria is penal and has reference to the satisfaction of him who inflicts." (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament)

"If you will think, Socrates, of the nature of punishment, you will see at once that in the opinion of mankind virtue may be acquired; no one punishes [kolasis] the evil-doer under the notion, or for the reason, that he has done wrong—only the unreasonable fury of a beast acts in that manner. But he who desires to inflict rational punishment [kolasis] does not retaliate for a past wrong which cannot be undone; he has regard to the future, and is desirous that the man who is punished [kolasis], and he who sees him punished, may be deterred from doing wrong again. He punishes for the sake of prevention, thereby clearly implying that virtue is capable of being taught." (Plato, *Protagoras*)

Revelation 22—Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse . . . Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood . . . The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life." (cf. Revelation 21:25 - "Its gates will never be shut.")

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