

Emmanuel Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Last Judgement
November 07, 2021
Sermon by Pastor Christopher Pflughoeft
What is the verdict?

¹⁹ Jesus answered them directly, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: The Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing. Indeed, the Son does exactly what the Father does. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. And he will show him even greater works than these so that you will be amazed. ²¹ For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to those he wishes.

²² “In fact, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³ so that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. ²⁴ Amen, Amen, I tell you: Anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He is not going to come into judgment but has crossed over from death to life.

—John 5:19-24 (EHV)

What is the verdict? Perhaps you all can recall sitting in front of the television waiting to hear what the judgment would be. High-profile cases such as *The People of the State of California v. Orenthal James Simpson* and the *State of Wisconsin v. Avery, Steven A.* tend to grab our attention. We want to know what the ruling will be. We want to see the verdict. For this reason, true crime podcasts and documentaries are top-rated. In all these situations, people are waiting for the nail-biting moment of declaring the verdict.

In such situations, the general audience looks forward with anticipation. Finally, after many moments of suspense, they feel relieved. The answer has come out. They finally know. The victims and families look forward with the hope of vindication—a much more intense period of waiting. However, the reality for those who face the judgment is much different. This is a time of intense grief and pain. What will be the consequences of their actions? What is the verdict?

On the last day, we will all stand before the judgment seat. Scripture says very clearly, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he did while in the body, whether good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10) People of Emmanuel, the judgment is coming. It could come today. It could come in thousands of years. Anyway, you know that the judgment is coming. On the last day, the good and the bad will be separated. Some will go to eternal life in the new heavens and the new earth. Others will go to eternal suffering in hell. Those are the only two choices. As we look forward to the last judgment, we too wonder, what is the verdict?

So, where do we look to find out what the verdict will be? Many will look to themselves. They will look at the nice things that they have done. They will compare themselves to the worst of sinners. They downplay the terrible things that they have done. In doing these things, they will try to convince themselves that the verdict ought to be positive based on who they are and what they have done.

Surmising such a verdict is wrong. Dead wrong. The Bible says, “There is no one who is righteous, not even one.” (Romans 10:3) Yes, no one is righteous, and all have sinned. The Bible says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) The evidence then for all people is sin and a lack of righteousness. Therefore, the verdict is clear. “The wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23) The deserved judgment will be for the Judge to say, “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire, which is prepared for the Devil and his angels.” (Matthew 25:41) So, we ask the question, “What is the verdict?” Those who look to themselves for security can expect no other judgment. No if, ands, or buts. The clear and straightforward condemnation for their sins. Eternity in hell. Hear how the Bible describes hell, “where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.” (Mark 9:47-48) What is the verdict? For those who depend upon themselves, rely on false religions, or deny its reality, the verdict is an eternity in hell.

People of Emmanuel, the judgment is coming. As you look forward with anticipation... As you bite your nails... In asking the question, what is the verdict, consider what our text for today declares to you.

The Jews approached Jesus and wanted to kill him. This is because he healed a blind man near the pool of Bethesda on a Sabbath and because he declared himself to be equal to the Father. In response to them, Jesus explains that he and the Father are in harmony. This is what Jesus said to them, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: The Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing. Indeed, the Son does exactly what the Father does.

For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. And he will show him even greater works than these so that you will be amazed.” Yes, the Father loves the Son. What the Son does is in line with the Father. Jesus also explains what the greater things are. Jesus says, “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to those he wishes. In fact, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted

all judgment to the Son.” Jesus did an amazing thing in giving a blind man sight, yet the greater things that he does and will do is bringing people from spiritual death to life, raising people physically from the grave, and judging people on the last day. Jesus declared his unity and harmony with the Father as well as his power and authority. Therefore, Jesus says, “so that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.”

Based on a person’s actions alone, all people deserve the guilty verdict and condemnation to hell. The key, as Jesus says, is the Son. “Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.” Rejecting the deity, authority, and power of the Son is not honoring him. This can be done in many ways. Rejecting the severity of his verdict toward sin. Excluding certain groups of people from the verdict based on age. Ignoring the immediacy and finality of his judgment. Those who do not honor the Son do not honor the Father. Those who do not honor God will hear the verdict of condemnation to hell.

So, what of you, dear people of Emmanuel? What is the verdict? When you stand before the judgment seat of Christ, what will he say? Will he say, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?” (Matthew 25:34) Or, will he say, “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire, which is prepared for the Devil and his angels?” (Matthew 25:41)

You can have confidence as you approach this day. You have confidence in Jesus. This is as he said, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: Anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He is not going to come into judgment but has crossed over from death to life.” You have heard the Word of Life about Jesus. You have heard the Word which proclaims that the Father sent His Son for you. You have heard the Word which declares that Jesus lived under the law for you. You have heard the Word which proclaims that Jesus faced the punishment on the cross for you. You have heard this Word. The Word through which the Holy Spirit works creating faith in your heart to believe in God. People of Emmanuel, listen to the verdict. You will live eternally in the new heavens and earth with your God forever. You have crossed over from death to life.

This is what will happen on the last day. If you are still alive, you will see Jesus descend in the sky with his army of angels. If you are already dead, your body will be raised, and your soul will reunite with it. You will be transformed from perishable to imperishable. You will be taken to his right hand, and he will say to you, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matthew 25:34) You will experience the eternal bliss of the new heavens and the new earth.

This is the courtroom scene. You stand before the judge. All of the evidence is listed and read before you: Your sins in thought, word, and deed, your well-known sins, and your hidden sins, the most wicked things you have done, and the seemingly innocent white lies—all of this evidence damning you to hell. Yet, the judge pounds his gavel and declares not guilty. Why? Because the Judge is your Savior. He took upon himself the punishment you deserved. He lived the perfect life you needed. What is the verdict? You will live forever in heaven.

People of Emmanuel, the last judgment is coming. Live in this knowledge. Live with the knowledge that because of Jesus, you have crossed over from death to life. Do not be afraid of that day; you know what the verdict is. Thank God for His wonderful grace. Thank him through your words and actions. Read His Word through which the Holy Spirit draws you closer to him. Come to church. Finally, tell others about Jesus, the Son of God, Judge, and Savior. Others look forward with fear. You do not. Tell them about the verdict of life in Jesus. Amen.