

Monday Morning Rewind – June 2, 2008



Good morning! And for those who graduated this past weekend, congratulations. "Graduation Day" was the title of last Sabbath's presentation. In our ongoing study of "Words of Life" from Jesus, we focused on His promise to return in John 14:1-3: *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."*

The second coming of Christ will be the greatest "graduation" of all time as those who have believed in and followed Jesus, will pass from death to life, from mortal to immortality, from faith to sight, and from earth to heaven.

To graduate and receive a diploma the student must have completed a required course of study. What is "the required course prescribed for graduation" from earth to the Kingdom of Heaven? What will those who "love His appearing" look like? What will they have accomplished? Matthew 25 shows us the graduation criterion, and for many, it's a complete surprise.

Rewind to Matthew 25:31-46. There we learn that the surprise of the judgment is that the "graduation requirement" is whether individuals have shown tangible love to others. Read this passage carefully and prayerfully. In this apocalyptic graduation/judgment scene, the surprise is that the graduation criteria are **not** the big doctrinal issues we give so much attention to – No mention of Sabbath, tithing, creationism, 2300 days, or the mark of the beast. But there is mention of the mark of the "best"—the mark of the saved; the mark of those who have internalized the grace and love of God. You may argue about the mark of the beast—what it is and who gets it; but there's no mistaking the mark of *the best*. Mt. 25 identifies it as **Mercy**. People who are saved by grace are graceful and moved to minister grace to others. Grace begets grace. A graceful God gives grace to Humanity so we can give grace to each other and show that we belong to Him.

It is not the signs of the times we should be worried about as we get closer to our Lord's appearing. *We should be watching for the signs of Christ's life in our own.* People point to the earthquake in China, or the cyclone in Myanmar, or the gas prices, or presidential politics, or global warming, or the pope's popularity in America, and say, "See, Jesus is coming!" "Jesus is coming!" "Prophecy is fulfilling all around us!" And it is true that prophecy is being fulfilled. But the greater and more important question is, are we being filled with the Holy Spirit? Is Jesus coming to your heart and mine everyday and in such a way that the more He comes, the more we look and act like Him? Are we loving Him more? Are we loving mercy? Are we living more for others than ourselves? Is our faith manifested by how we respond to the needs and deficiencies in others? Are we more likely to wash our enemy's feet or punch him in the face? What is the evidence that we are ready to graduate and go home to live with God?

The graduation criterion for disciples of Jesus is to have a heart like His. And this cannot be achieved by "trying," but only by trusting Christ to live His life in you. This is the most important lesson we have to learn in the school of Christ. And if we allow God's grace to make us graceful people who give the grace we have received to others, we will "graduate" with honors. –Pastor Randy

p.s. In honor of our graduates, and in response to the double-dog-dare my head elder issued to me, I've attached my academy graduation photo, circa 1977. All I can say is, my hair had to accommodate a massive intellect! Nick, you owe me!