

Discussion opener

Most of us are OK with the idea of really bad people “getting what they deserve” in hell. Imagine, though, you get to Heaven and see Hitler or some child molester walking around? How would you react?

Message Thoughts

It's Hell Week at First Church. It's not a terribly pleasant topic to discuss, but one we can't afford to ignore or get wrong. This weekend we looked at what Jesus had to say about hell. Is it a real place? Who will end up there?

Discussion

Notes for discussion leader in italics. If it's helpful to read these thoughts to the group, go for it!

Read Matthew 25:31-46

What's your initial reaction to this passage?

What seems to be the criteria for entering “the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world” (v34)?

Helping the least of these. You can almost imagine someone saying to Jesus, “but Jesus, I went to church, I had the plastic fish on my bumper, I sang in the worship band, I tithed...”

Does this passage make anyone else feel a bit uncomfortable? Does it hit too close to home?

Read Revelation 20:11-14, Matthew 13:49-50, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9

Again, how does God appear to decide who receives eternal life in His kingdom?

“And each person was judged according to what they had done.”

“Separate the wicked from the righteous”

“Punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”

What do we learn about Hell from these passages? Is it a real place?

What criteria for entering the kingdom is suspiciously absent from these passages? Why is that significant?

There's no mention of saying the sinner's prayer, no mention of church attendance, nothing about where you stand on contentious theological issues. It seems to be based mostly on our actions.

We read in Ephesians 2:8-9, that we are saved by grace, “not by works, so that no one can boast.”

How does “saved by grace” jive with what looks like God judging the world based on our actions?

Maybe our actions are a natural reflection of our relationship with Jesus. If we're not feeding the hungry and looking after those in need, maybe we really don't know Jesus. Sobering thought.

Do we live like we believe in Hell?

Prayer

Think of one person you know who doesn't know Jesus. Keep the name to yourself and pray for them silently for the next couple minutes. Pray that God would work in their heart and continue to draw that person toward Him. Pray that God would use you in whatever way possible to help that person come to know Christ.

Leader, after a couple minutes of silent prayer, close the prayer time. Pray that God would break our hearts for those that don't know Him.