

Matthew 25:31-46

Jesus said, “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the **sheep from the goats**, and he will put the **sheep at his right hand** and the goats at the left.

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for **I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.**’

Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘**Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.**’

Then he will say **to those at his left hand**, ‘**You that are accursed, depart from me** into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’

Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, ‘**Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.**’ **And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”**

The Gospel of the Lord.

Sermon

When we see a homeless person on the sidewalk we tend to make a wide girth, even crossing the street just to stay away. We justify our action by telling ourselves, “I don’t want to be asked for my hard earned money” or, “I’m late for my appointment” or, “Why doesn’t he get a job?” But what if this beggar was Jesus?

In this morning’s gospel, Jesus admonishes us, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

We often have little sympathy for the poor. We can be critical, we don’t understand the situation they are in, it is so different from our comfortable lives.

We take for granted that we can buy a Big Mac when we have the slightest twinge of hunger. Sometimes we're not even hungry, but the clock says it's lunch time, so we eat. Do we really understand what true hunger really is?

On a global scale, we here in the United States cannot comprehend what it is like to live in a third world country where people suffer from hunger, poverty, disease, infant mortality, and where sometimes, death may seem a relief. Our part of the world does not know how another part of the world suffers. We must understand that we are a part of a broken world. What can we, the disciples of Jesus, do? We can start by simply doing good works and having mercy for others by displaying our faith and love. Good works, no matter how small, is significant.

When you give someone a bottle of water, you are giving it to Christ.

When you give food to another, you are giving it to Christ.

When you give a blanket to someone, you are giving it to Christ.

When you visit someone in the hospital, you are visiting Christ.

Kahu Kaleo Patterson ministers to prisoners at Halawa and Waiawa correctional facilities so they can discover their cultural and spiritual identities, Fr. Greg at St. Mary's provides health services, food and clothing to the poor on Thursdays. These are just a couple of the many examples of good works in the Episcopal Church.

Jesus cares about the needs of the poor, in fact he identified with their needs for he himself was poor, and during his three years of public ministry, homeless.

Jesus warns us that “When the son of man comes, he will separate people as a Shepard separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” To those on his left, he says, “you are accursed, depart from me!”

Do you know why dogs and cats are different?

A dog looks at you with big brown eyes and thinks
to itself:

You love me.

You feed me.

You care for me.

You must be God!

A cat looks at you with piercing hazel eyes and
thinks to itself:

You love me.

You feed me.

You care for me.

I must be God!

There are cat people and there are dog people.

There are glass half full people, and there glass half empty people.

There are Costco people, and there are Sam's Club people.

And you know who you are.

Again, Jesus says there are two kinds of people, the sheep people, and the goat people.

Jesus is telling us what will happen when he returns. He is telling us because he loves us and he wants us to choose wisely.

Which one are you?

We celebrate a God who chooses to keep company with the least of us.

By ourselves, we cannot solve the homeless problem, and we cannot set a prisoner free, but we can use our gratitude and thankfulness as motivation to seek out and serve the disinherited, dispossessed, and disenfranchised in our society.

Believe in Christ and he will guide our today as well as our tomorrow.

Believe in Christ and he will show us the way to good thoughts, words, and deeds. Keep Christ in your heart to show compassion, mercy, and love for the least of us.

Remember that the message today is what you do for someone you do for Jesus. Our day to day practice of compassion toward our neighbors is more than just believing in a creed or a set of doctrines.

Jesus is talking of a way of living that is not motivated by the fear of hell or the hope of heaven, but a life driven by love for the stewardship of life. For centuries, we as Christians and followers of Christ, have reached out to the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned. We can strive to be like God and offer boundless love and hospitality to all.

Our culture sees hospitality, usually in our homes, with a small group of friends. But true Christian hospitality is a public reality through the places and people we find ourselves with. In a world that has grown guarded and harsh in this political climate, Christians are called to imitate the table manners of Jesus by being sacraments of God's hospitality.

The test is this: When you see another person in need, do you treat them as if they were Jesus?

Amen.