"Reign of Christ Sunday" ***Matthew 25:31-46***

"Take your Bible and take your newspaper, and read both.
- Karl Barth, 1963

I was led to revisit this quote by a recent email. The email featured a column by Betsy Shirley, Editor-in-Chief of *Sojourners*. For those unfamiliar, *Sojourners* is a magazine and community best described as representing social justice evangelicals for more than 50 years. Her column reflected on the scrambling done of late by national media outlets to explain "progressive Christianity" in the wake of the mid-term elections. As Ms. Shirley puts it:

I chuckled when one national newspaper described Matthew 25 as the "Bible Chapter That Explains the New Christian Left." (Never mind how the chapter has inspired generations of justice-seeking Christians throughout history.)

I too chuckle (or is it grimace?) at the thought of this "discovery" that has been hiding in plain sight for some 2000 years. Even more of a chuckling grimace comes in the New York Times tagging it as somehow peculiar to or binding only on the Christian left. Neither Left nor Right hold copyright on this parable's summons. Rather, you might say, it holds copyright on us.

Still, I should thank the Times for bringing up Matthew 25:3-46 for fresh consideration this week. It is the gospel text assigned to Reign of Christ Sunday this year. And why not? Its setting is made clear at the outset. It is the final judgment, when Christ sits on the throne of glory. The scene's unfolding further reveals what Christ judges to be good and faithful service (or not).

Just as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me.
*just as you did **not** do it to one of the least of these, you did **not** do it to me.*

This is where Barth's advice about reading both newspaper and Bible comes into play. For by keeping eyes and ears open to the wider world around us, we cannot help but encounter the least of these. And that is when the parable's call kicks in. What will we do, or not do, in response?

For Reflection and Action:

In what ways might (or does) this shape your view of the parable; of Reign of Christ Sunday?
Discuss the significance of BOTH groups in the parable not seeing Jesus in the least of these;
What does that reveal about motives/"qualifiers" for ministry to/among such ones today?

An "at home" assignment: read this parable, then read/watch a trusted news source:
Who are revealed as the least among us; what would ministry to/among such ones look like?