

A Closer Look (February 24, 2021 - Upper Room)

Read: Matthew 25: 31-46

The Sheep and the Goats

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?’ ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

⁴⁰ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

⁴⁴ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

⁴⁵ “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

⁴⁶ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” (NIV)

Galatians 6:2 - Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (KJV)

**Read the February 24 installment in the Upper Room
Lesson background:
based on the above scripture**

Sources: www.jesusfilm.org ; www.biblestudy.org ;

- Throughout Jesus's ministry, Jesus often referred to himself as the Good Shepherd and the people who followed Him as sheep. The imagery was apt. Sheep are known to be defenseless and reliant upon a shepherd for care, protection, and direction.

- Stanley Hauerwas writes, “The difference between followers of Jesus and those who do not know Jesus is that those who have seen Jesus no longer have any excuse to avoid ‘the least of these.’”
- This parable is about the time of the judgment. The sheep are symbolic of those who follow and obey Christ, while the goats represent those who chose not to follow Jesus and His example on earth (a witness).
- The real point of the message is the difference in behavior between the two groups, the sheep and the goats. One group is merciful, kind, generous, loving and willing to do whatever it takes, even at their own expense, to help out another fellow human in true need. Jesus regarded their actions or inaction as personally affecting him.

Daily application from this lesson:

- God wants our lives to overflow with mercy, love and compassion
- My salvation does not depend on good works, but caring for others is evidence of my faith
- There is no small act of compassion in the eyes of Jesus
- Slowing down my daily pace may help me to see and hear those in need whom I may not notice otherwise
- Sharing another’s burden may be as simple as listening or just being available

Reflection:

1. Describe a time when you have you started a project thinking it wouldn't take long to complete but soon realized it would.
2. In what simple ways can you share someone's burdens today?
3. What would life be like if you and everyone around you tried to live in a way that would lift others up, bear on another's burdens and follow the example that Jesus set?

Thought for the week:
If I slow down, I can better see and hear
others and lift them up