

First Baptist Church, Smiths Falls

October 22, 2017

Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

31 ¶ "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. 32 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, 33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 34 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; 35 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, 36 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.' 37 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? 38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39 And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' 40 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.' 41 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; 42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 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.' 44 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?' 45 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.' 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER: LORD'S PRAYER:

MESSAGE: "Come, You Who Are Blessed"

- Let me tell you a story about a man named Martin - and since he came from to a region of what we now call France known as Tours, he was called Martin of Tours. Martin of Tours was a Roman Soldier, but Martin was also a Christian. One Cold winter day, Martin entered into a city where a beggar approached him, asking for alms. Martin found that he had no money, but also saw that the beggar's face and hands were turning blue with the cold, and he was violently shivering. Many of us may well have continued on our way: after all, how many similar beggars would Martin find, or what could Martin do with nothing? Martin, though, took off his soldier's coat - a coat worn with age - he tore it in half, and gave half to that man who begged him for alms. That night Martin had a dream. In it, he saw the heavenly places and all the angels. Then he saw Jesus in their midst. Martin was surprised to see that Jesus was wearing something. And then he recognized what it was. In his bewilderment, Martin of Tours wondered why Jesus was wearing half of a Roman Soldier's coat. Then an angel of God said to Jesus,

"Master, why are you wearing that battered old cloak? Who gave it to you?" To both questions Jesus answered softly, "My servant Martin gave it to me."

- Matthew 25 has a parable which we call the Sheep and The Goats. It is a parable of judgement, and being prepared. The Judgement of God is pictured here, and all of us will stand before God on wonderful day. Let's use the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats from Matthew 25 to understand our actions today, and the meaning of this parable.

Part 1: The Parable

- There are those in this parable who will enter into the joy of the kingdom of God (v. 34), and those who will be sent away into eternal judgment (v. 41). There is a righteous judge (v. 31). There is a throne (v. 31). There is a dialogue and there is astonishment at the result of our treatment of others.
- Let me read to you Proverbs 14:31 (NIV): "*Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God.*" And Proverbs 17:5 (NIV) says: "*Whoever*

mocks the poor shows contempt for their Maker; whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished." In this parable from Matthew 25, Jesus is about to share this truth that has been known throughout the Bible, but He will, once again, share it in a most astounding manner.

- A flock is presented to the king (v.32). This is a presentation of the worthy and those who are deemed to be unworthy who come before the king. And the king separates the good from the bad, the right from the left (v. 33).
- It was normal for shepherds to add goats to their herds: goats were good for milk and for meat. It simply was good economics to have both in your flock. Also the goats were restless, and tended to keep the herd on the move. But goats could not handle the cold night air, and therefore had to be sheltered, making them less desirable than the sheep who liked the cold air, and preferred to sleep in the outdoors. Separating the sheep from the goats therefore was a normal event.
- In Matthew 25, Jesus has a parable, where there is a separation of the sheep and the goats. To each, there are specific instructions.

Part 2: The Goats: vv. 41-43

- The goats are put on the left side of the Master on the throne - the left representing the impure, unclean, the place of those who are the unselected. Mat 25:41-43 says: *"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; 42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 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.'*
- Now keep in mind that there is nothing wrong with goats. Goats may have been the flock of choice for Arabs and other people around the Hebrews, but goats are not, in any way, evil or bad.
- And yet in this parable the goats were rejected because they are unknown to the king who sits on the throne. Why are they rejected? They are scorned because they did not do certain acts. They did not care for others selflessly, caring as if they themselves should get something from the action. In other words, they did not perform unselfish acts of kindness to those who were in need.
- Now there is a caution: there are many in the world who are trying to

do good deeds - whatever “good” seems to be. There are people who believe that if they must do great acts, actions which they feel will help them get close to God -"I am a good person, and I do good things, therefore God has to reward me." Some argue that this is what this parable is all about - I am to do good to others, and therefore I will be close to God.

- But this argument is not one which this parable supports. It is not the acts which makes the goats unacceptable: instead they are separated because God does not know them (v. 45: *"...whatever you did not do for the least of these, you did not do for me."*). God did not know them. What a sad statement. Imagine, the fear of dying, the fear of the unknown world beyond this one, and suddenly you are confronted by God on the heavenly throne, and God simply says, "I do not know you." God does not know them because they did not care for His beloved children. Oh, they might well have done acts of kindness, but always for the wrong reason, perhaps to get something back, or with the intent that others see their acts and marvel at their goodness. They did not care for God's beloved people.

- One of my friends talked about being with a group of caring people in downtown Ottawa on a February night. They spent the night trying to understand the plight of homeless people. She talked about how the fancy, well-dressed people would avoid those in need who were on the cold streets, and how they even offered disdain as they hurried past. This is the heart of this story - there are those who do not use their talents to help others, and any acts of kindness they do, they did not do with a pure heart of giving to God.
- Those who are put on the King's left side - the goats, did not love others who are hungry, those who are thirsty, those unloved in prison, a stranger that did not get welcomed, someone who is naked and did not get clothing, those who are sick and needed a visit - in short, the goats are those who did look past their own station in life, and see the needs of Jesus and His people, and take care of them.

Part 3: The Sheep:

- The sheep, on the other hand, are not even aware that they did such things for others - they are unselfish in their deeds, and they use what they have for Jesus. This parable is about serving the Lord as you

serve others. It's about Martin of Tours's cloak being put onto Jesus as you help those in your neighbourhood, those on the street, those who cannot give back to you - all done in the name of Jesus without you giving even one thought to yourself. The sheep are not just going through the action of doing good deeds, they are disciples of Jesus who are listening to The Master, Jesus Christ, about how they should act in the world. They did not go into the world to show off their righteousness, but to use their talents, and those things which God has given to them, for those in need - for those of God's kingdom who need help.

- One could paraphrase the parable like this: "I sat alone in the cafeteria (or the kitchen of the office, or the mall food court), I sat alone, with little to eat, and you sat with me, and you shared your lunch. The kids (or the others at work) laughed at my clothes, or my family's tired old car, but you treated me as if they were brand new, or that those things do not matter. I was the one who was never chosen for any ball-team, nor any group in the area, yet when it was your turn to choose, you chose me. Everyone, I mean everyone

laughed at my mistakes, but you said kind words to make me feel better. When I stayed home from school (or from work, or the neighbourhood group, or even from Church or Sunday School) I thought that no one would miss me, but you called me and asked when I would be back.”

- It is this caring attitude, a caring attitude which reflects Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour which Jesus talks about in this parable. God will help you to care for those around you, and most importantly, you sheep of Jesus Christ, God will help you to see those around you who are in need.

Part 4: 3 Things to Note

- Let’s notice three things about the response of those who are on the right - those who are the sheep - those who give their acts to others unselfishly for Jesus Christ:
- First, they are simple acts - a hungry person gets food, the thirsty water, a stranger is welcomed, the sick cheered, the prisoner is visited - not events which will never make the front page of the newspaper, but they will fill God's Book of Love;

- SECOND, the acts must be uncalculated. These are acts which are done not to gain merit with God, not to pile up entries in God's Book, but instead are done because there is a need, and God has directed that need to us, and we have the resources to fulfil that need. It is pure, unselfish generosity;
- THIRD, isn't it wonderful to think that Jesus Christ Himself makes it clear that these acts are done for Him, are actually done TO Him. Jesus says the benefit is to Him Himself.

Conclusion:

- Let’s look around us and try to see the opportunities in our communities in which we can clothe Jesus, give Jesus food or drink, ways in which we can welcome and cheer Jesus, and visit Him when He is in a desperate place - all for Jesus.
 - Let’s find the simple things in life, and help those in need for Jesus.
- Then, we will hear the words of the Father from Matthew 25:34:
- "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world."*