

Sermon for November 23rd, 2014, Christ the King Sunday

Twenty Fourth Sunday of Pentecost, Matthew 25:31-46

Blessings and peace to you from God the Father, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

During the past few Sundays in our **gospel** readings from the book of Matthew we have heard Jesus telling **apocalyptic** parables about the end of time. **Two** weeks ago we heard about the **10** bridesmaids. **5** of them came prepared with enough oil for their lamps to last until the bridegroom came. The **other 5** were unprepared. Consequently, they had to go to purchase more oil and by the time they came back the bridegroom had passed, the door to the wedding feast was shut, and the bridesmaids were not allowed to enter into the party. The final verse of the parable was, *‘Keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.’*

Last week our gospel lesson was the parable of the master who went away for an extended period of time. When he left he **entrusted** 3 of his slaves with sums of money. **Two invested wisely**. They were commended and invited into the **joy** of the master. The 3rd slave hid his money in a hole because he **feared** the master. The master’s response to this slave was, *‘You wicked and lazy slave.’* The final verse in **that** reading was, *‘As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’*

On this Christ the King Sunday, Jesus is **not quite so subtle** about the message. Maybe we have not been able to associate with the bridesmaids or the slaves but here today the message is pretty clear. This reading is one that might be especially tough to hear and think about primarily because **not only** does it hit home with each of us but **most of us** do not like to think about or talk about what **God's judgment** upon us at the end of time will be. None of us want to think of ourselves as the goats, the ones who will be sent off to the left side to endure the eternal fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. **Who wants that????**

Truly, we will not know if we on the sheep side or the goat side until our life has come to an end and then folks, it is too late to change or to do much about our circumstances.

But when the final judgment day **does come** who of us **doesn't** want to hear, '*Welcome to the wedding feast.*', who of us **doesn't** want to hear, '*Well done good and faithful servant.*', and who of us **doesn't** want to be on the sheep side who get to go off to the right side with the Father and hear Jesus say, '*Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*' Oh, what a **happy day** for the sheep!!!!

In Christian imagery sheep and goats are portrayed in very different lights, hence the reading for this morning. The sheep are depicted as the meek and gentle followers of Christ (the Lamb of God) and the goats are depicted as unruly and

coarse outcasts who are otherwise known as **scapegoats** and widely used as the basis of portraits of the devil.

All that being said, we come back to our reading for this morning. Where Jesus is talking about the **righteous** people and the **unrighteous** people and what they **did** or **did not** do for others. As most of you **probably** know we have a rather large homeless population here in Riverside. On the front page of the **Local** section of last Sunday's newspaper there was this story whose headlines reads, "*Shelter 'in crisis mode'*". The story talked about that just weeks before extra '*cold weather*' beds are set to open at Riverside's **only** emergency homeless shelter officials are **scrambling** to find more money so they won't have to cut services. It went on to talk about the **gap** between operating costs, need, and the reality of funds available.

This week was known as *National Hunger and Homeless Awareness Week*. Last Saturday night until early Sunday morning people could go and become '*educated*' on what it means to be homeless. There were soup kitchens to be visited, there were shelters to be visited, there was the opportunity to spend the night in one of these shelters, to find out what it is to **cohabit** with other families (men, women, and children) in the same rather **crowded** facility. **Path of Life** ministries, which runs the shelters here in Riverside, serve approximately 1,500 people in their various shelters each year.

This week at the Riverside Access Center over on Hulen Place the homeless and the underserved were able to go to get free haircuts, free flu shots, UCR medical students came to give health education, there were substance abuse resources, nutrition information, there were free cell phones given, there was a CBU school of nursing health fair, there was a free bus ride to Set Free ministry for a dinner, prayer partners from the Baptist church were there, there was a toiletries and food give away, free eye exams, free shoes, and free sack lunches just to name a few. I would like to see **Eden** partner in this endeavor next year and I am going to be contacting Damien O'Farrell, the head of Path of Life ministry, this week to see what we could do to serve when they have this event next year.

This is how in the city of Riverside we have the opportunity to do what Jesus was talking about in our reading for today. **This** is how we Christians can serve those in our community—the Christ in our community—by doing **this** kind of outreach. To see the **face** of God in everyone you meet because when you see **their** face you are seeing another beloved child of God no matter **who** they are and no matter what physical or financial situation they are in.

That is why once again this year I am asking you during the Advent season to donate any type of cold weather outer wear that you can. It could be a coat, heavy sweatshirts, sweat pants, or anything that could keep someone warm on these **cold** mornings. Bring it to my office during the week or drop it off on

Sunday morning and I will get it to either Path of Life ministries or over to Calvary Presbyterian where they have a clothing give away **every** Sunday after the meal they serve at 5:30 pm.

There is **so** much we can do. We have been given **so** much. These are things that Jesus asks do not have to cost us anything. To **give** something of what you have to another in need, to **show** some hospitality and kindness to another, to **visit** someone who is sick and **pray** for them. These things do not cost. It takes only some time and effort on our part. It is **so** easy. *'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.'* That is it!!! Simple as that.

So at this Thanksgiving time when we are giving thanks to God for all we have been blessed with please remember that there are those in this world who have not received as much as you as the **world** views it. Another child of God who could use a kind word, a smile, a pair of shoes, a coat to stay warm, a phone call to let them know that they are on your heart, or so many more things. It is easy.

When **all** is said and done who of us does **not** want to be the sheep when the Son of Man comes in his glory? Jesus gives us the way to make that happen right here in our text today. It is up to us to take His words to heart. May God **continue** to shower you **all** with grace, mercy, and love at this Thanksgiving time and as

next week we enter into the Advent season—the season of coming—come Lord

Jesus may **each of us** be blessed as we await your arrival. **AMEN**