

Matthew 25 v 31-46 Eynsford 5-8-18

The Gospel reading from Matthew is an explanation to us of the day of judgement, when like a shepherd he, Jesus, will separate the sheep from the goats. He will bless the righteous, those whom He truly knew. He will send away all those who did not clothe or feed Him.

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.'

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.'

God will separate his obedient followers from the pretenders and unbelievers. Do you, me, treat folk you meet as if they are Jesus, whoever they are, whether they're your best friend or someone you can't get on with. whether they live in a lovely house or on the street. What we do for others tells us what we really think about Jesus 'words to us' feed the hungry, give the homeless a place to stay, look after the sick. How well do our actions show how we live for Jesus. We should treat others as if they were Jesus.

WILL YOU BE WITH THE SHEEP OR THE GOATS?

On Christmas Day last year, I went with my eldest daughter Lara up to London. We walked around Victoria and Westminster talking to, and giving out cups of soup and rolls to folk on the street. At the beginning of the year I helped at winter night shelter in Dartford, to help the homeless, and I help run courses in prisons to help guys change the way they live.

Well if that's not being one of the righteous, doing for others etc, I don't know what is. I'm sure I've ticked all the right boxes I'm sure.

But what about the person in Sevenoaks High Street, selling the Big Issue, that I just walk past. I'm sure you've seen her up by Waitrose. Or the person sitting on the ground with nowhere to live, who'd like a coffee, that I just don't notice as I'm too busy looking at my phone. Or the person who wants a small job done, or someone to talk to, or someone just to be a listening ear. and I say I'm too busy as I sit in my garden reading.

Does that make me a goat and unrighteous?

Verse 45 & 46, "I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you are refusing to help me". And they will go into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life".

So what does it mean when Jesus says " **whatever you do for the least of these you do for me**"

This parable is not an argument that getting into heaven is about doing good deeds and being a good person. I and others have preached on that many times before. It's about living a changed life that loves others like he has loved us. Jesus teaching in this parable is echoed elsewhere in scriptures.

James 2:26 "**For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead**".

1 John 1:14 "**We love because he first loved us**".

The good works mentioned in the parable are not the *cause* of salvation but the *effect* of salvation. As Christians we should become like Christ.

[2 Corinthians 3:18](#);

¹⁸ And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

[Colossians 2:6-7](#)

⁶ As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

[Galatians 5:22-23](#) .

²² By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

Good works in a Christian's life are the direct effect of these characteristics, and are only acceptable to God because of the relationship that exists between us His servant and Him the Master, the saved and their Saviour, the sheep and their Shepherd

[Ephesians 2:10](#).

¹⁰ For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

The core message is that God's people will love others. Good works will result from our relationship to the Shepherd. Followers of Christ will treat others with kindness, serving them as if they were serving Christ Himself. While

“goats” can indeed perform acts of kindness and charity, their hearts are not right with God, and their actions are not for the right purpose – to honour and worship God.

If what you say or what you do, you wouldn't do or say to Jesus. Then don't do or say it. Let everything you do or say to others, be as if you were doing or saying it to Jesus.

This Kingship of Jesus is clearly seen in our gospel text as He says: "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Gathered before Him will be all the people of the world and he will separate them as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Each group is being separated for what they are, sheep or goats. Jesus doesn't make them sheep or goats. He divides them as He sees them, He will divide us as He sees us. Sheep on His right hand or his hand of mercy, and the goats on his left hand, his hand of judgment.

Then, Jesus goes on to say how the division was made, upon what basis. The criterion of this judgment is our response to the cries of human need around us. For when we hear that cry and respond out of love, we are hearing the cry of our Lord and responding out of love to Him, because He first loved us. Jesus is saying our response to the needs of others is a reflection of His indwelling love in our hearts.

We are sheep people, or Jesus people, as we reflect love that Jesus gives us to others.

We are goat people, or people who do not love, when we hoard the love of Jesus selfishly in our hearts.

In a book titled *The Healing Word* by Barbara Brown Taylor, she writes.

Judgement is above all about being known all the way down. It is about being seen through, seen into, and known for who we really are. It is about the total failure of our defences and the abject poverty of our pretensions. It is about stepping into the light, or having the light turned upon us, so that every nook and cranny of our being is illuminated for examination. It is about standing before God without our armour, our mask, our possessions, our excuses, with nothing but our beating hearts and the slim volume of our life histories to commend us, waiting to hear God's true word about ourselves.

When the day of judgement comes will God lead you to the door on His right, through the door of righteousness, or will you be on the left, saying He did not truly know you.

Will He call your name to join Him into eternal life, or will you go with the goats through the door of the unrighteousness?

Let us meet and greet all folk as if they were Jesus.

Amen.