

SERMON : CHRIST THE KING 2020 (Matt 25:31-46)

MAY the words of my mouth and the meditations in our hearts be acceptable in your sight O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. <Amen>

Canadian poet and author, Shane Koyczan, writes about a variety of social issues including bullying, cancer, poverty, death, homelessness, eating disorders and more. Shane once penned these words, “Tragedy is a switch, we’re never more than one flick away from, it can happen to any one at anytime.”

In the gospel lesson that is ours this morning, Jesus is telling his disciples about the last days. At that time, Jesus says, the King will gather all the nations around the throne, and he will say to the sheep on his right - - - “you fed me; gave me a drink, clothes, a welcome, and cared for me.” The people asked, “When?”

Then, Jesus said, the King will turn to the goats on his left and he will say to them, - - - “you did not feed me; did not give me a drink, clothes, a welcome, and you did not care for me.” Those people also asked, “When?”. <PAUSE>

Listen to the words of Jesus, “*When you failed to help the least of people, you failed to help me.*”

This teaching of Jesus is so very different from all his other teaching in the Gospel of Matthew. For in the previous chapters, Jesus is telling parables. But in this text, Jesus is looking into the future, explaining in graphic detail, what sort of judgment day awaits every one of us.

This is NOT not a parable. This is NOT a fairy tale. THIS IS TRUTH, coming right out of the mouth of Jesus. It tells us that God does, in fact, watch the way we live our lives, and that **the way we live matters**.

Now, I know what you are thinking. You have heard my sermons on grace; you have heard me describe our God as a loving and merciful Father, ready to forgive our every sin. And now, you are wondering “Okay, David, which way is it? Is God going to grant us grace, or is he going to hold our sins against us? Do we have to earn our way into the Kingdom, or will it be given to us as a gift?”

These words of Jesus about the sheep and the goats trouble us, because, all along, we thought we were sheep. But what if we’re goats? It troubles us, because the stakes are high, and eternity lasts forever.

Everything you have heard about God’s grace and love is true. He does, indeed, stand ready to forgive every sin and every act of disobedience. But **God also has expectations of how his people are to live their lives**. The saints will be:

- generous
- kind
- filled with compassion
- understanding of others who have been given different gifts

That's what the saints do !

Giving, doing, generosity, kindness, compassion and understanding are part of the DNA of a Christian. And once we recognise that God has claimed us as sons and daughters of the King, and once we realise that we will inherit everything the King has promised, then things in this world diminish in their value.

So now, the question that stands before us is this: What does our lifestyle say about us? According to Jesus' words on this "Christ the King" Sunday, it seems to say this: We will recognise the sheep and the goats by the way they live their lives. You see, sheep graciously share what they have, paying particular attention to those who are in desperate need. Goats want to keep all they have to themselves. Sheep see others in distress, and they are moved to compassion. But goats see others in distress and they are moved to ignore.

In short, when goats see an apparently homeless man, sitting on the streets, they see a homeless man. When sheep see an apparently homeless man, sitting on the streets, they see Jesus.

WHAT DO YOU SEE? <LONG PAUSE>

In a few moments, we will give our morning offerings. The problem with preaching a sermon like this (with its underlying theme of helping, generosity, and giving) is that it can be used to "guilt" people into giving.

I pray I haven't done that, because guilt doesn't motivate us in the same way gladness does.

The gifts we are about to give have the capacity to touch the lives of people in this parish, in this community, and around the world.

The needs of people are growing, so our ministry opportunities have grown, too.

I trust this congregation of saints to love the people that Jesus loves.

Victor Hugo (1802 - 1885) the French poet and novelist, once said "We can give without loving, but we cannot love without giving."

As our journeys continue, may our love draw us forward and may we feed Christ; give him a drink, clothe him, welcome him, and care for him IN WHATEVER FORM HE APPEARS BEFORE us.

I runga e te Ingoa o te Atua, te Matua, te Tama me te Wairua Tapu.
In the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit <AMINE>