

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME?

Parable 16: Sheep and Goats

Mt 25:31-46

I. SETTING/BACKGROUND/ILLUSTRATION

1. **LAST WEEK'S PARABLE**—GOOD SAMARITAN
 - o Question 1—What must I do to inherit eternal life?
 - o Answer 1—Love God and love your neighbor
 - o Question 2—Who is my neighbor?
 - o Answer 2—The one who shows mercy
 - o Point—whoever shows mercy to others demonstrates love for God worthy of eternal life
 - o Other lessons—may be costly and risky—defies prejudice—God puts people before rules
2. **THIS WEEK'S PARABLE**—TAKES MERCY FURTHER
 - o Stresses the importance of showing mercy in **everyday** life
 - o Shows how this kind of mercy **ministers to Christ** Himself
3. **ILLUSTRATION**—**MARTIN OF TOURS** (4th century)
 - o Roman cavalry soldier—gave half his cape—*capella*—to a beggar
 - o Dream—Christ wearing it in heaven—told angel—“**My servant, Martin**, gave it to me.”
4. **LAST PARABLE** THAT JESUS TOLD

II. BIBLICAL PASSAGE

Mt 25:31-46—**31** *But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation 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 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to 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 And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ 40 The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’ 41 “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been 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; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ 44 Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord,*

when did we see 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 say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ 46 These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

III. EXPLANATION

A. CONTEXT

1. END OF OLIVET DISCOURSE—Mt 23-25

- o Last of five discourses in Matthew
- o Four end with judgment parables—[chapters 5-7—13—18—23-25](#)
- o The other one—chapter 10—ends with parallel passage

Mt 10:42—*And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.*

2. MATTHEW 23-25

- o [23](#)—Woes against Pharisees—Lament over Jerusalem
- o [24](#)—End of world—Destruction of Jerusalem
- o [24](#)—Parousia—two parables
 - **Fig Tree**—though there are signs—it will be sudden
 - **Two Servants**—be responsible and diligent at work
- o [25](#)—Three end-time parables
 - **10 Virgins**—be prepared
 - **Talents**—be good stewards—accountable
 - **Sheep and Goats**—judgment

3. UNIQUE PARABLE—NOT IN OTHER GOSPELS

4. NOT REALLY A PARABLE

- o Parabolic saying—[vv32-33](#)—extended analogy
- o Pastoral word picture—describing separation at the final judgment

B. BACKGROUND

1. JEWS BASED JUDGMENT ON TWO THINGS

- a. Keeping the Law
- b. Covenant lineage—descent from Abraham
 - Implication—Jews would receive preferential treatment

2. THIS PARABLE ESTABLISHES DIFFERENT BASIS FOR JUDGMENT

- o All ‘nations’—peoples—will be judged the same way

- o **New standard** = how we **respond** to the **needs** of others

C. PURPOSES

1. TO SHOW US—WHAT GOD **CARES** ABOUT

- o Like Parables of Lostness—The Father cares for the lost—God is the Loving Father
- o Here—God cares for ‘**the least of these**’

2. TO REMIND US—HOW GOD WILL **JUDGE** EVERYONE

- o The first discourse of Matthew—**Sermon on the Mount**—ends like this parable
- o The accountability standard—for entering the Kingdom of Heaven—is similar

Mt 7:21—*Not everyone who says to Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.*

3. TO DEMONSTRATE—HOW KINGDOM PEOPLE **CARE** FOR OTHERS

- o Treating others with **dignity**—because they are created in the **image of God**
- o Showing others mercy in **everyday** life—because we **love God**

D. PARABLE

1. THE SON OF MAN COMES

- o From the majestic scene of **Dan 7:13-14**

I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and persons of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed

2. ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE GATHERED

- a. Some say **all the nations** this means
 - **All Christians**—sheep receiving rewards—goats without rewards
 - Christian **sheep with rewards**—**non-Christian** goats—non-reward Christians absent
 - All **non-Christians**—some will be saved by good works—the rest not saved
- b. Term = **εθνοι** = ‘ethnics’
 - Elsewhere—it means ‘Gentiles’ or ‘nations’
 - But in **Matthew** = ‘peoples’—ethnic groups
 - Obvious meaning = all peoples—as in **Daniel**—Christian and non-Christian

3. THE SHEPHERD SEPARATES THE SHEEP FROM THE GOATS

- a. Sheep and goats grazed together in daytime—were separated at night

- b. **Hard to distinguish** between some Palestinian sheep and goats
 - Similar problem with—‘wheat and tares’
 - c. Unobvious differences between sheep and goats
 - **Genetic:** Sheep—54 chromosomes
Goats—60 chromosomes
 - **Glands:** Sheep—glands under eyes and between hooves
Goats—glands beneath their tails
 - **Sheep:** Have divided upper lip—goats do not
 - **Coats:** Sheep wool is all usable
Goats’ outer hair is unusable—cannot be spun or dyed
Only fine goat hair next to body is usable
 - d. Noticeable differences
 - **Tails:** Sheep tails hang down, usually docked
Goat tails stand up, full-length
 - **Horns:** Sheep often hornless—or curved at side of head
Goats’ horns—narrower and straight
 - **Feeding:** Sheep—grazers—eat short grass, clover
Goats—browsers—eat leaves, twigs, vines, shrubs—anything!
 - **Behavior:** Sheep flock together—agitated when separated from flock
Goats—aloof and independent
Sheep stay out in rain—goats seek shelter
 - e. **Application**
 - Only close inspection—or watching behavior can discern some sheep from goats
 - Likewise—it may be hard to distinguish some false Christians from real ones
 - The surest way to tell—their behavior! How they act!
 - The Shepherd knows them well—and can tell the difference instantly
4. SHEEP ON THE RIGHT—GOATS ON THE LEFT
- o Ancient kings—‘right’ was place of favor—‘left’ of less honor
 - o **Middle-eastern custom—never shake with left hand!**
 - o Faithful on right—unfaithful on left
 - o Blessed on right—cursed on left
5. LEAST OF THESE MY BROTHERS
- a. Some say
 1. Brethren = Christians

- Either—all the ‘needy’ Christians
- Or—Christian missionaries who take the gospel to the nations
- 2. Dispensational view [19-20th century concept]
 - Jews—during the Tribulation
- b. Obvious first century meaning
 - **Anyone in need**—like those Jesus helped

E. MAIN POINTS

1. FINAL JUDGMENT—HELL—HEAVEN—ARE REAL
 - a. **Hell**—prepared by God—as a **real place**
 - Not metaphorical—not imaginary emotional state—not ‘what we make it’
 - Purpose—eternal habitation for Satan and his angels
 - b. **Hell** is **eternal**—unending
 - Just as heaven is eternal—**v46**—[If hell isn’t—neither is heaven!]
 - Final state is not annihilation—but ‘eternal punishing’
 - c. **Heaven** will be inhabited by kind—**caring** persons—with **Christlike DNA**
2. GOD TAKES IT PERSONALLY—HOW WE TREAT OTHERS
 - a. When we **help** someone in need—we do it for a **child of God**
 - God as Father—wants His children cared for
 - b. When we **neglect** someone in need—we **dismiss** God
 - c. When we **harm** someone—it **hurts** God

Acts 9:5—Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?
3. **SALVATION** IS NOT BASED ON WORKS
 - a. Salvation is determined by **identity**—not behavior—or works
 - Sheep were saved because they **were** sheep—who *therefore* behaved like sheep
 - Goats were not saved because they **were** goats—who *therefore* behaved like goats
 - b. This ‘sheep-identity’ is not original from birth—not pre-determined in eternity
 1. We are *all* born goats—selfish and sinful
 2. But our identity can be transformed
 - Changed by God’s **grace**—to sheep—taking on the identity of the Good Shepherd
 - Our new identity is established by **trusting** and following—Christ our Shepherd
 3. By their **faith**—is how ‘sheep’ are **identified**—individually at death
 - This is an **inheritance**—**v34**—which cannot be earned—only claimed by faith
 - Inheritance **prepared** eternally by the **Father**—for all sheep who follow Christ
 - c. Goats—are condemned

1. Not because they are sinners
 - We are all sinners—but sin can be forgiven
 2. Instead—due to **lack of trusting** God—forever **saying no** to God’s grace
 3. This causes them to continue as goats—in perpetual **disobedience**
 4. Never **trusting** Christ—never entering His **priesthood**—never **ministering** to Him
4. BUT THE **VERDICT AT JUDGMENT**—WILL BE BASED ON OBEDIENCE
- a. The **evidence** of saving faith—the final **public** notice—is based on **behavior**
 - b. The proof of **being** Christians—is that we **act** like Christ
 - Not that we can recite a creed
 - Not that we know the Bible
 - Not that have perfect church attendance
 - **But** that we put faith into action—and *help* people
 - c. Jesus’ brother—James—put it this way

Jas 1:17—*Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.*

2:15-16—*If your brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled, and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?’*
 - d. We **act like** Christ—by **ministering to** Christ—*you have done it to me!*
 1. **Sheep**—**minister to Christ** Himself
 - a. Because they **love** God and **love** their neighbors by **caring** for people in need
 - b. They treat others with **dignity**—because they are created in the image of God

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord
And we pray that our unity will one day be restored.
And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love . . .

We will work with each other, we will work side by side
And we’ll guard each man's dignity and save each man's pride
And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love . . .
 2. Goats—*never* do any sheep-like things
 - They not only **neglect** others—they **dismiss** God altogether
5. SOME PEOPLE WILL BE SURPRISED
- a. Some **sheep** will be surprised
 1. Not because they are saved
 2. But because their works are so effortless
 - They practiced unconscious kindness

- Not realizing they are doing ‘good’—it flows out of their being
- Like Jesus’ power flowed from Him without effort
- 3. And surprised—because they are unaware of **ministering to Christ** Himself
- b. Some **goats** will be surprised
 1. Because they do not acknowledge the reality of judgment and hell
 2. Because they do not realize they are offending God Himself
- c. But **God is never surprised!**
 - He knows and remembers everything
 - And rewards those who help others in need

Heb 6:10—*For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.*

6. CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTLIKE WORKS

- a. **Motivated** by love of God—and love for neighbor
- b. **Result** in serving Christ Himself
- c. The **humblest** of actions—‘simple gifts’
 - Often—we want to do impossible and ‘great’ things
 - When we get frustrated—we give up and do nothing!
- d. Without desire for personal gain—not keeping score
 1. Sermon on Mount—do not do your acts of righteousness before men—but **secretly**
 2. **Pure motives** for doing good
 - Not for heavenly reward
 - Not for prestige or notoriety
 - Not for personal thanks
- e. Meet three basic needs
 - Physical provision—food and drink
 - Protection—shelter and clothing
 - Emotional comfort—visiting the sick and imprisoned

7. CHRIST STILL INVITES US TO JOIN HIM

- a. Jesus’ first invitation was—*Come, follow Me*
 - His ultimate destination was—the Father’s House
- b. He continued to invite enquirers to the same destination
 - **v34**—*Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you*
- c. That invitation was sealed with His redeeming blood

Mt 26:1-2—*When Jesus had finished all these words, he said to His disciples, You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be handed over for crucifixion.*

d. His invitation is still open

Rev 22:17—*The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.*

V. INVITATION

LORD, MAKE US INSTRUMENTS OF YOUR PEACE

Lord, make us servants of your peace:
Where there is hate, may we sow love;
Where there is hurt, may we forgive;
Where there is strife, may we make one.

Where all is doubt, may we sow faith;
Where all is gloom, may we sow hope;
Where all is night, may we sow light;
Where all is tears, may we sow joy.

Jesus, our Lord, may we not seek
To be consoled, but to console,
Nor look to understanding hearts,
But look for hearts to understand.

May we not look for love's return,
But seek to love unselfishly,
For in our giving we receive,
And in forgiving are forgiven.

Dying, we live, and are reborn
Through death's dark night to endless day;
Lord, make us servants of your peace,
To wake at last in heaven's light.