

Meeting Jesus in Unlikely People

Scripture Reading — Matthew 25:31-46

31"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 34"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35For 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, 36I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit 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? 38When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' 40"Then the King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' 41"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' 44"Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' 45"Then he will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' 46"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." —

"?Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?"
Matthew 25:37

Whenever I walk by a homeless person with an expectant empty cup on the sidewalk and the person says, "God bless you," I cringe a little inside. Am I being manipulated?

Notice that both groups of people in Jesus' story are baffled by the verdicts they receive. "When did we see you ... ?" they ask. The biggest surprise is that the King, Jesus, knows what they were up to even when they didn't think he was around. Often we forget that God notices as we deal with waitresses, the elderly in the nursing home, panhandlers, the gas station attendant, the mentally challenged, the person next to us in line at the grocery store. Such people are the very ones who are known to God. Everything done for them is counted as being done for God.

Jesus sees everywhere, and he identifies with people who are considered "the least" in our world today. So what does that mean we should do?

If we are like sheep, rather than goats, we'll look to see Christ in the lost, the least, and the last. That's a good place to start, simply by looking. God calls us to look at people as brothers and sisters, not charity cases. Our relationship may only be momentary, but in truly looking at others we learn something from God about ourselves. Then we need to act on what we have learned.

Prayer

Lord, we're all in need of help. Forgive us when we easily dismiss people who may not seem important, for they too are made in your image. Help us show your love. Amen.

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