

## “AS YOU DID TO ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE ... YOU DID TO ME”

A sermon for Sunday, November 26, 2017, by the Rev. Dr. James Mutayoba  
CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY

Gospel: **Matt 25:31-46** <sup>31</sup>“And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

### THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

<sup>32</sup>“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. <sup>33</sup>So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near - at the doors! <sup>34</sup>Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. <sup>35</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”

### NO ONE KNOWS THE DAY OR HOUR

<sup>36</sup>“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. <sup>37</sup>But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. <sup>38</sup>For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup>and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. <sup>40</sup>Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. <sup>41</sup>Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. <sup>42</sup>Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup>But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. <sup>44</sup>Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

### THE FAITHFUL SERVANT AND THE EVIL SERVANT

<sup>45</sup>“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? <sup>46</sup>Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.”

It is Christ the King Sunday and the famous parable of the last judgment. How should Christians live in this interim period between now and the return of the King, Jesus Christ, in his glory? The text 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 nations. Then the King will judge all nations. He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.*

TODAY, Jesus the King calls on his followers to live as an expectant mother does as she waits to give birth. We are warned to be prepared for his second coming when he will come suddenly as Judge of the world. Then from the many of us, he will select a group of a few who will have qualified to enter into heaven.

These who are in his words: **“my brothers and sisters.” They are his family.** You certainly remember in my former sermon, the *Ten Virgins*, that I identified the selected few that Jesus calls **“these my brothers & sisters”** as **the invisible Church, (ecclesiola in ecclesia), the Church within a church.**

In the Beatitudes, in his Sermon on the Mountain, Jesus identified the chosen few. They are the **“Blessed”**: **the poor in spirit, those that mourn, those that hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the ones persecuted for righteousness sake.** Jesus does not pick the **rich and the powerful, the celebrities or the nobility.** Instead Jesus chooses **the least** on the socio-economic ladder; **the ones like Lazarus** who was ignored by the rich man.

Jesus says, **“Just as you did to one of the least of these (who are like Lazarus), ... you did it to me...”** *The least among us* are not hidden from our sight. **They are always visible.** In real life, **the poor are always with us.**

What then is wrong with the social group or category of people that we call ‘rich’ or ‘well-to-do’ - **the powerful, the nobility, the celebrity?** Don’t these people belong? Are they already judged? Are they not members of Jesus’ family too? Are they not his **brothers & sisters?** Well, **we are all rich** in many

ways. **We have been blessed enormously. We are endowed with multiple gifts. We are not** the least in society!!

Communities develop around us as we live - the rich in rich neighborhoods, the poor in a ghetto. Educational districts are divided in a similar way. Income level determines where one resides, how one chooses to live. **We don't live in a ghetto or a terribly poor neighborhood.**

The text suggests that the disparities that we take for granted as part of ordinary life do matter when we appear before God's judgment seat **because we created them.** The good news, found in our text: ***"Just as you did it to one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it to me..."*** tells us what we must do. We know what to do, who to serve and where to find them - ***"least of Jesus' brothers and sisters."*** We see them down the street - some begging, some homeless, some with brown paper in their hands asking for help, and some mentally ill or confused.

Some of these are Christians, baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Some of these are not Christians, but they are still Jesus' ***"brothers and sisters."***

Here is **the expectation** for you and for me; **every follower of Jesus has some ethical and social responsibility, as a member of the ecclesiastical body (the Church), to meet the needs of the poor.**

Jesus said, ***"... I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to see me."***

Feeding the hungry, welcoming a stranger, dressing the naked, visiting the sick, **amounts to serving Jesus.** We know that some needs may be self-inflicted, but Jesus doesn't tell us to exclude anyone for any reason.

Some suffer because their needs are beyond their control.

The worst thing we can do is create a reason to ignore as we often do. We *know* when we refuse to do what is right. The voice from within continually prods us, pointing to our fault. Sometimes we even feel some irresistible force inside us causing us to act almost instinctively. It is the Holy Spirit calling to us!

When we respond to the needy, the King's response is this, ***"Truly I say to you, as you did to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did to me."*** Doing what good is serving Christ. And we encounter Jesus every day. We choose daily either to shut Jesus out or to welcome him in by how we treat the needy.

This text has provoked much good **Christian care: rescue missions, soup kitchens, Salvation Army ministries, Lutheran Social services, Lutheran Relief Organization, Catholic Charities, and World Hunger, The American Social Gospel Movement, Transitional Houses for those coming out of prison, and so on ...** These organizations and many others were born in answer to Jesus' call to **serve the least of his brothers and sisters.**

I am not asking you to do what is beyond you; I am asking you to minister to those in your neighborhood. **Even the smallest charitable work, which you can manage to do, is a start.** It might be **helping one abandoned child or one homeless person, one drug addict or one hungry person.** **Just choose a charitable act. You may feel comfortable or uncomfortable.** No one can do everything but everyone can do something.

- Put your talents to work, do not bury your compassion.
- Righteous acts do not depend on how well dressed we are or how much we give in the collection basket. Righteousness acts are a result of serving Jesus.

The King whom we praise is **the King who hung on the cross;**

The King we follow **was crowned with thorns;**

The King we adore **was stripped naked and exposed to shame** in the day light;

The King we honor **is the One who will come back in glory** to judge the living and the dead. Clearly, the **persecuted and helpless** represent **the suffering and crucified King**. **Doing good to the needy is doing good to the crucified Jesus Lord.**

There is no greater joy than coming to the aid of anyone in time of despair. If Christ is your King, then you need to know him through those that suffer.

*“Just as you did to one, to one, to one of the least of these, ... you did unto me. And the King will say, “Come O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you . . .”*

*To those on his left he will say “you are cursed into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”* (Middle Eastern people regard the left hand as the hand that cleans the back door. It is not a coincidence that Jesus says those on the left are accursed. The left hand does what I have said it does).

*But Blessed are we if we are chosen to be amongst those who are welcome into his glorious Kingdom.*

**AMEN**