

“Let me tell you a story” Part 8
The Least of These...
Matthew 25:31-46
February 19, 2023

- I. A PARABLE or a VISION of the future? (v.31-46)
- A. A DIFFERENT kind of COMING. (v.31)
 - B. A PROCESS the people UNDERSTOOD. (v.32-33)
 - C. The sheep INHERIT the KINGDOM. (v.34-36)
 - D. The goats RECEIVE their DESTRUCTION. (v.41-43)

This is the final parable we have from Jesus in the book of Matthew. He is very clear in this one about the timing of what He is describing. “When the Son of Man comes in his glory...”. It’s the end of the age. And the one who will be judged by men in just a few chapters, will be on the throne doing the judging at that time.

1. Kid’s Question - What questions does this story of the sheep and the goats bring to you?
2. What have been the primary applications that you have drawn from this parable in the past?

- II. What MAKES the DIFFERENCE. (v.37-40, 44-46)
- A. The different TREATMENT of the LEAST. (v.40,45)
 - B. Jesus is EMBODIED in the LEAST. (v.35-36,40,42-43,45)

This parable is often used to point toward a system where we are rewarded with heaven for what we have done on earth. We will explore that today, but what I want us to see are two clear ideas that we can build from as we seek to interpret and apply the parable.

3. Does this parable seem to say that those who do the right things will inherit the Kingdom but those who don’t will not? How does that square with the idea of salvation by grace and not by works?
4. What do you think that Jesus meant by “whatever you did for one of the least...you did for me?”

- III. Who are the LEAST of THESE?
- A. “These BROTHERS of MINE...” (v.40; Mt. 12:48-50)
 - B. “The LEAST of THESE...” (v.45; Acts 6:15-7:2; Acts 13:38)
 - C. The ANSWER is YES. (Jn 3:16)

This is the big question...or at least it appears to be. Scholars are divided over this. Some vegetarians even use it to support their choice not to eat meat, seeing animals as one example of the “least of these”. But what did Jesus mean by that phrase?

5. Which of these two interpretations of “the least of these” seems to most correct to you?
6. Is question 5 even the right question to be asking? If not, what is the right question?

IV. Some thoughts on INHERITING the KINGDOM. (v.34)

- A. The KINGDOM is always a GIFT. (v. 34; Lk. 12:31-32)**
- B. It's what HE knows, not what WE know. (v.37-38; Mt. 7:22-23)**
- C. An VERY important REALIZATION. (Jn 19:38; I Cor. 12:27)**
- D. We ENCOUNTER Jesus in OTHERS. (v.40,45)**

This is an important section to get right. How can we know if we are a sheep? How can we live in such a way as to inherit the kingdom of God? There are several things that we should note as we seek to answer these questions.

7. Doesn't saying the kingdom is always a gift just mean we don't have to do anything?
8. How does this parable impact my own relationships with others this coming week?
9. How does it impact the “others” that I don't want to care for?