

Living Lent | Day 5

Sheep or Goat?

[Jesus said,] “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Matthew 25:31–46 RSV

Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

“Not my monkey, not my circus.”

“If you can’t do it for everyone, don’t do it at all.”

“I’ll help you as long as it doesn’t hurt me.”

This kind of mindset has settled into our collective way of thinking. We tend to protect our comfort and shy away from the messiness of others because it might cause us discomfort or conflicted feelings. But what did Jesus say about complacency and indifference toward people in messy situations?

In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus spoke of a future sorting of sheep and goats. He explained that as He sits on His heavenly throne the sheep will be on his right hand and the goats on his left. To the sheep on His right, He will thank them for the way their belief in Him was evident in the way they cared for others- even when it took them outside of their comfort zones or caused personal sacrifice. He explained every time they cared for someone in need, they were really caring for Him. Then Jesus will turn to the goats on His left and tell them to depart from Him into the eternal fire. Their lives did not demonstrate evidence of complete and total surrender to God. They revolved around themselves, not around reaching people in practical ways as the tangible expression of the Gospel in action.

Just in case it isn’t clear, you want to be with the sheep, not the goats. You want your faith to be seen in the way you treat others, the way you go out of your way to meet needs and welcome them just as they are. When you refuse to help someone that God has placed in your path, you aren’t just protecting your security and comfort, you are rejecting the image of God in that person.

But you may think, “There are so many needs! I can’t help them all!” Andy Stanley once said, “Do for one what you wish you could do for all.” God isn’t calling you to help everyone, but He is placing specific people in your life who He is calling you to help. Pray and ask God who that might be and then boldly put your faith into action!

Contributor and Contributing Body of Christ

Anne Bosarge is the Online Pastor for The Chapel and the Associate Director of the Office of Congregational Development for the South Georgia Conference of United Methodist. In addition, Anne is a writer, having authored several books and articles, merging her love for Jesus with her passion for teaching and curriculum writing. She is continuing to grow in the development of her heart for ministry and leadership in the multi-campus systems, programs, and ministries of The Chapel, which was founded on the premise that we should all be connected with God through worship and teaching so that we all become more like Jesus for the sake of others, building strong friendships for life and deploying into our cities, communities, and world so that they, too, can be transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Chapel has and remains a financial supporter of Morningstar, and a prayer partner for the well-being of the Children and Staff.

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