

Introduction: Let's go right to the heart of the matter and ask ourselves a question that God is asking each one of us, each nation, and His Church. What do we think about people who lack adequate food and clothing, who do not have access to clean water or adequate medical care, who are foreigners trying to adapt to our culture or incarcerated because they have been convicted of breaking the law? If we are like most Americans, we have great sympathy for those without food or clothing. But, as we go through the list, we may have increasingly less sympathy, especially for those convicted of a crime and sentenced to prison. *** Even if we have equal sympathy for people in each and every one of these situations, the bigger question is what are WE going to DO about these people? How will we feed and clothe people? Should it be through participation in non-profits, including church and parachurch? Should the government do it with our taxes? The same questions must be asked about providing clean and safe water and caring for the sick. Finally, how do we give assistance to people who struggle to adjust to our culture or who are not willing to be restrained by reasonable laws? Do we write them off? Or, do we say someone else should help them, they are not my problem? *** In our Gospel passage this morning Jesus makes it clear that our eternal destiny rests BOTH on our concern for all of the 'least' among us AND what we do to relieve their condition and to restore them to full fellowship in His Body. ***Jesus is in the least of His people*** Let us now pray our hearts will be fully open to The Holy Spirit as we dig into *Matthew* and the *Psalm*.

I. The Son of Man will come as king and reward the righteous. (*Matthew 25:31-40*)

A. The glory of the coming of the Son of Man to gather and to separate. (*Verses 31-33*)

1. But when the Son of Man may come in his glory and all the angels with him. (*Verse 31a*)

Son of Man: Daniel was given a vision of the Son of Man approaching the Ancient of Days to be given an everlasting dominion and glory (*Daniel 7:13-14*). Jesus is the fulfillment of this vision.

Glory: Glory is the splendor, honor, radiance, and greatness of kingly majesty.

2. And he will sit on the throne of his glory. (*Verse 31b*)

Throne: At the end of this heavens and earth, ten kings will oppose the Lamb, the King of kings, but he will be victorious (*Revelation 17:12-14; 19:11-21*). This is the throne of King Jesus, Lord of all.

3. All the nations will be gathered together before him, and he will separate them one from another. (*Verses 32a*)

Paradox: In order to separate the righteous from the cursed, the Son of Man will bring all nations before him to be separated.

4. As the shepherd is separating the sheep from the goats. (*Verse 32b*)

Shepherd: The Covenant God, Yahweh, is David's shepherd (*Psalm 23*); and, Jesus is the shepherd of His sheep, the Church (*John 10:1-18*).

5. And he will indeed set the sheep at his right and the goats at his left. (*Verse 33*)

Sheep and goats: The sheep are righteous by the faith of God. The goats are cursed by rebellion to God.

B. The king will say to those on his right: inherit the kingdom prepared for you because you fed, clothed, welcomed and visited me. (*Verses 34-36*)

1. The king will say to those at his right: Come! Those having been blessed of My Father. (*Verse 34a*)

Having been blessed: They have already been blessed by God because they lived in faithful obedience to God's Word in the Torah, the prophets and the writings.

2. Inherit the having been prepared for you, from the foundation of the world, kingdom. (*Verse 34b*)

Inherit prepared kingdom: God's kingdom existed before the physical universe, including this world, was spoken into existence by Him (*Genesis 1*).

3. Because I was hungry and you all gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you all gave me drink; and, I was being a foreigner and you all welcomed me. (*Verse 35*)

First triad: Jesus says He was hungry, thirsty and sojourning as a foreigner with them and they supplied his need to be fed, to have water and to be made to feel welcomed.

4. Naked and you all clothed me; I was sick and you all visited me; and, I was being in prison and you all came to me. (*Verse 36*)

Second triad: The two lists are linked in this way: the basic needs of food and clothing; dehydrated people are more susceptible to illness; and foreigners who are strangers to the laws and traditions of a location are more likely to violate at least one of these and end up in prison.

C. The righteous will have said when did we do all this to you; and the king answers: as much as you did it to one of the 'least' of my brothers. (*Verses 37-40*)

1. Then the righteous will have answered him, saying: (*Verse 37a*)

Righteous: These are people who obeyed all God's Word by faith in Him.

2. Lord! When Thee we saw being hungry and we fed; or, being thirsty and we gave drink; when we saw Thee a foreigner, gathered with? (*Verses 37b-38a*)

Questions: They asked their Lord when they ministered to Him from the first triad of needs.

3. Or naked, and we clothed Thee; or, when did we see Thee being sick or in prison and we came to Thee? (*Verse 38b-39*)

More questions: Similarly they ask their Lord when they ministered to Him from the second triad of needs. They do not remember ever doing any of this for Him.

4. And having answered, the king will say: Truly, I am saying to you all, as much as you all have done to one of these brothers of mine, the 'least', to me you all have done. (*Verse 40*)

Least of my brothers: Jesus is restating a theme throughout all Scripture that the awesome God who created everything and is Lord of all, most cares for and identifies with those who are the 'least': the poor, the widow and the fatherless. (*Deuteronomy 10:16-21; Psalm 82:3-4; Zechariah 7:8-10*)

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II. But the cursed, who did nothing for the least, will go into everlasting fire when he judges with equity.

(*Matthew 25:41-46; Psalm 98:7-9*)

- A. The king will say to those on his left: depart into everlasting fire because you did not feed, clothe, welcome and visit me. (*Matthew 25:41-43*)
 1. Then he will also say to those at his left: Depart from me! Those having been cursed. (*Verse 41a*)
Cursed: Everything is reversed. Instead of a command to come, these must go from the king because they have been cursed.
 2. [Go] into the everlasting fire having been prepared for the devil and his angels. (*Verse 41b*)
Accuser and demons: 'diablos' means accuser and his angels have fallen to become demons. They will go to the 'unquenchable' fire; to which John the Baptist said 'chaff' would go, when Jesus was baptized (*Matthew 3:12*).
 3. Because I was hungry and not you all gave me to eat; I was thirsty and not you all gave me drink; and, I was being a foreigner and not you all welcomed me. (*Verses 42-43a*)
First triad: The cursed on the left did absolutely nothing for the king to meet the triad of needs the righteous fully met.
 4. Naked and not you all clothed Me; I was sick and in prison and not you all visited to Me. (*Verse 43b*)
Second triad: This time the king connects their neglect of him when he was sick and in prison, and uses the ministry of visitation for both.
- B. And they will say: when did we not minister to you; and he will answer: as much as you have not done to one of the 'least'; and, they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life. (*Matthew 25:44-46*)
 1. Then they will have answered him, saying: (*Verse 44a*)
No character quality: They are not called wicked, in contrast to the righteous, but nothing at all.
 2. Lord! When Thee we saw being hungry, being thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, in prison and not did we minister to Thee? (*Verse 44b*)
Question: Instead of six questions as complete sentences, they give a staccato list of the two triads of human need concluding with and we did not minister to Thee?
 3. Then he, having answered them, says: Truly, I am saying to you all, as much as you all not have done to one of these, the 'least', not to me you all have done. (*Verse 45*)
Not one of least: Here he leaves out brothers and speaks of all the 'least' in the world. He says whenever people do not minister to the needs of the poor, the widow, and the orphan, they are not ministering to him.

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4. These will go away into punishment everlasting; but, the righteous into life eternal. (*Verse 46*)
Two destinies: People who do not minister to the 'least' will suffer eternal punishment. The righteous who provide relief to all categories of the 'least', even those in prison, will have life everlasting.
- C. The Covenant God will judge the world with righteousness and all people in equity. (*Psalm 98:7-9*)
 1. The sea will roar and its fullness, the habitable world and those dwelling in it. (*Verse 7*)
Sea and land: Most of the surface of our planet is sea, and it will thunder before Yahweh, along with the six continents on which people are living.
 2. The overflowing rivers of springtime will clap their hands, and the mountains will together give a ringing cry of joy before Yahweh. (*Verses 8-9a*)
Rivers and mountains: Two land features are rivers, giving drinking water and transportation, and mountains influencing weather and rain. These are personified as praising The Covenant God.
 3. For He has come to judge the earth, He will judge the habitable world in righteousness, and the peoples uprightly. (*Verse 9*)
Judge: The Kings of kings is also the judge of all people.
Righteousness: His righteousness is perfectly just and fair.
Uprightly: Yahweh is perfectly straight and even. We would call Him, in the most positive sense, a 'straight arrow'.

Yahweh is the upright judge

Conclusion: Through powerful word pictures Jesus describes the final judgment for all people. Only those people who care for AND give practical and productive ministry to the 'least' among them will be blessed and enter into eternally enduring life with Him – the righteous Judge and King. All other people are cursed and sent away to a punishment that never ends.

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