

Fix Your Eyes on Jesus' Care for the Poor: "The Least of These."

Focus Passage: Matthew 25:31–46

Larger Context: Sandwiched between Jesus teaching about his second coming and events leading to Jesus' crucifixion

Other Passages Referenced: Matthew 10:40; 18:5; 28:10; John 3:36; Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 2:8–10; Hebrews 2:17

Comments to Group Leaders:

- As you meet this week, be aware that the national political and social climate is front and center on the minds of many. These are historical and critical times for our nation that merit our humble contrition and prayer. If we are not intentional, our group discussions can end up going down a trail that is not healthy and potentially divisive. Please keep your group moving toward Scripture and its application to daily living. In this passage, you can highlight that Jesus is returning to judge every individual from every people group. "Nation" in this passage does not refer to a political state like the USA. Pull the conversation back to "How will I respond to Jesus when I stand before Him at His return and we talk about how I've ministered to Him by ministering to the least of these?" The answers to our nation's challenges will only be found by looking to God's words and adjusting our own hearts accordingly.

"Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts" — Zechariah 4:6

Sermon Recap

The sermon stated, "In Matthew 25 we get a glimpse of the final judgement. Jesus is described as coming 'in his glory.' He does not come to merge into the conscience of all living things, but to sit on a "glorious throne." He does not come with some of the angels gather, but 'all the angels' are with him. He does not come to say, how can I help get things back on track, but to 'separate,' to render the just judgment on our lives. It is not just a few nations that will be summoned before him, but 'before him will be gathered all the nations.'" At His first coming, many never saw Him and others who did failed to recognize Him as the promised Messiah King. Jesus declared that at His return, everyone would see and recognize Him. Don't miss seeing Jesus and don't miss serving Jesus in *the least of these*. (Refer to last Sunday's message on Jesus as our true treasure.)

Jesus stated that while He had not been present physically, actually He had been among them all along in the presence of "the least of these." The least of these certainly included fellow believers in need but may have also included everyone in need.

We should be careful to note that Jesus was not teaching that people can be saved by doing good works. Rather, He was saying that those who are saved will demonstrate their salvation by ministering to *the least of these*. The sermon claimed, "Faith is the reason for salvation. Good works are the result of salvation." It is remarkable that those who were affirmed for ministering to Jesus by ministering to *the least of these* were genuinely surprised and puzzled at how Jesus said they had ministered to Him. They did not point to their good works as a justification for their salvation.

Serving *the least of these* requires, humility, proximity, regularity, and availability—the availability of one's self and one's resources. Don't miss seeing and serving Jesus by ministering to the least of these.

Group Gathering

Group Check-in — Care, Celebration, Encouragement (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. Informal conversation to allow individuals to catch up with one another.
2. Ask if anyone would share how they've been hearing and obeying God's direction.

Allow the Word to Speak — Be Hearers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

READ Matt 25:31–46

1. What from the passage or sermon was most impactful to you?
2. Were you left with any questions or confusion about the passage or sermon?
3. List the actions that Jesus associated with the “sheep” who had indirectly ministered to Him by ministering to others.
4. What two things are said to have been “prepared” ahead of time (Matt 25:34; 41)?

Put the Word into Practice — Be Doers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. Who are some examples of *the least of these* within a ten-minute drive of where I live?
2. Where do I tend to display pride and arrogance? How do I need to cultivate greater humility?
3. With whom among *the least of these* am I in proximity? Am I using that proximity to minister to them directly and to Jesus through them?
4. Do I need to minister to *the least of these* more intentionally and regularly? What are one or two concrete steps I can take toward that end?
5. How available have I been in the last month to minister to others with my energies and resources? Do I need to make adjustments in the coming month?

The Big Question: What do you sense God's Spirit saying to you and what concrete action will you take in response? Share your answer with the group or another trusted Christian and ask them to pray for you.

What We Hope Members Glean from the Passage

1. No set answer.
2. No set answer.
3. Jesus said people ministered to Him by doing the following to *the least of these*:
 - Feeding the hungry
 - Giving drink to the thirsty
 - Welcoming the stranger
 - Clothing those who have no clothes
 - Visiting the sick
 - Visiting those in jail
4. The **kingdom** that was prepared before the foundation of the world; the **eternal fire** prepared for the devil and his angels

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES:

Click [here](#) for some good opportunities to serve with our local and global mission partners.

Further Resources – Illustrations and quotes from the sermon can be found on the “Sermon Slides” link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org