

Matthew 25:31-46

<sup>31</sup>“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. <sup>32</sup>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, <sup>33</sup>and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. <sup>34</sup>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; <sup>35</sup>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, <sup>36</sup>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.’ <sup>37</sup>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? <sup>38</sup>And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? <sup>39</sup>And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ <sup>40</sup>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.’ <sup>41</sup>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; <sup>42</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup>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.’ <sup>44</sup>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?’<sup>45</sup> 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.’<sup>46</sup> And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

## Reflection

This is one of the most classic passages in the Bible. Jesus says that when the Messiah comes in glory, he will separate the sheep from the goats. Episcopalians are notorious for disliking judgment, but God and the Church have high expectations for us.

If you have any doubt, reread The Episcopal Church's Baptismal Covenant found in *The Book of Common Prayer* (pp. 304-305). "Will you continue in the apostles' teaching...persevere in resisting evil...proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ...seek and serve Christ in all persons...strive for justice and peace among all people...?" These are high expectations!

Jesus tells us that the "king" (or God) will say, "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" (25:35-36). His listeners will ask when this occurred.

"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," notes the king (25:40). We may never directly provide Jesus with a warm coat, a comfortable bed, a good meal, or visit him in prison, but if we do this for anyone in need, we will have done it for Jesus.

We encounter Christ whenever we serve those who are poor and needy, whether they live in poverty or are a neighbor or family member facing challenges. Whatever we do for the least of these, we will do for Jesus.

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## **Questions** \_\_\_\_\_

In what ways do you care for the lowly and the oppressed?

As you helped another person, have you ever felt as if you were helping Jesus himself?

## **Prayer** \_\_\_\_\_

Almighty God, you long for us to be your hands and feet, reaching out to care for the poor and needy. Help us to discover your presence as we assist those who are afflicted or who are on the margins of society and long for your healing and compassion. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.