Are you a sheep or a goat?

Matthew 25:31-46

Kalamazoo Mennonite Fellowship

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

This passage is a favorite passage among Anabaptists, I think. Only Matthew has this story.

To whom is it addressed? Who are the “all the nations” and who are the “least brothers”?

Primarily, the world and witnesses to the gospel. Secondarily, any one who treats others and who receive “treatment.” Compare. Matthew 6:14: “If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you.” Matthew 7:2 “For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.”

We know that it calls us to care for the hungry and thirsty, welcome the stranger, visit those in prison, clothe those who need clothing. I could do a whole sermon on why this would encourage us in working with refugees, for example.

We want to be the sheep, but we fear we are the goats.

But we are to “fear not.”

St John Chrysostrom (quoted in Rudolf Brändle’s *Jean Chrysostome - L'Importance de Matth. 25,31-46 Pour son Éthiqu*e *,* that is, *John Chrysostom, The importance of Matthew 25:31-46 on his ethics*).

“Now Christ is in distress ... down here he is thirsty, he is hungry ... he reaches out to you.”

“We despise our Lord, we let him walk the streets naked, asking for bread from door to door, standing in the crossroads, and we look down at our hands without giving him anything.”

“Christ has no shelter; he comes as a stranger, naked and hungry.”

Brändle also quotes Pascal: “"Jesus will be in agony until the end of the world: do not sleep until then.”

Nadia Bolz-Weber:  
  
Because I just don’t think the economy of grace includes 2 separate classes of people, one who hunger and one who offer food. The fact is, we are all both sheep and goat. We are both bearers of the Gospel and receivers of it. We meet the needs of others and have our needs met. And the strangeness of the good news is that —like those who sat before the throne and said, Huh? When did we ever feed you Lord? — We never know when it is that we touch Jesus in all of this. All that we have is a promise, a promise that your needs are holy to God. A Promise that Jesus is present in the meeting of needs and that his kingdom is here. And that he’s a different kind of king who rules over a different kind of kingdom. Because it looks more like being thirsty and having someone you don’t even like give you water more than it looks like polishing a crown. It looks like giving my three extra coats to the trinity of junkies on the corner than it looks like ermine trimmed robes. That is the surprising scandal of the Gospel; the surprising scandal of the Kingdom: It looks like the same crappy mess that bumps us out of our unconscious addiction to being good, so that you can look at Jesus as he approaches you on the street and says, "Man, you look like you could use a good meal." https://sojo.net/articles/matthew-25-how-i-met-my-husband

I am a transit point for wealth, not a destination. –Mark Roth

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3:17).

"But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16).

"That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate" (1 Timothy 6:18).

"For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you" (2 Corinthians 9:1).

"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3:17).

"For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land" (Deuteronomy 15:11).

"But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16).

"For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Hebrews 6:10).

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

"Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13).

Compare Matthew 10:37-42.

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross\* and follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is righteous will receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because he is a disciple—amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward.”