

“Seeing Jesus”
Message by DD Adams
Providence United Methodist Church
Christ the King Sunday
November 23, 2014

Today’s gospel lesson is taken from the 25th chapter of Matthew, verses 31 through 46. I’ll be reading from the Common English Bible. “Now when the Human One comes in his majesty and all his angels are with him, he will sit on his majestic throne. All the nations will be gathered in front of him. He will separate them from each other, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right side. But the goats he will put on his left.”

“Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who will receive good things from my Father. Inherit the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world began. I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothes to wear. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.’

“Then those who are righteous will reply to him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we see you as a stranger and welcome you, or naked and give you clothes to wear? When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ “Then the king will reply to them, ‘I assure you that when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me.

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Get away from me, you who will receive terrible things. Go into the unending fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels. I was hungry and you didn’t give me food to eat. I was thirsty

and you didn't give me anything to drink. I was a stranger and you didn't welcome me. I was naked and you didn't give me clothes to wear. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't visit me.'

“Then they will reply, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and didn't do anything to help you?’ Then he will answer, ‘I assure you that when you haven't done it for one of the least of these, you haven't done it for me.’ And they will go away into eternal punishment. But the righteous ones will go into eternal life.” This is God's word for God's people. Thanks be to God.

Let's pray. Blessed Jesus who loves all people everywhere, sharpen our hearing. Take your living hands and shape and refine us to be better Christian disciples. Affect our heart to be transformed so we can meet the needs of the least of these. Let us stop at nothing to be more than we were yesterday, to give more, love more, and allow Christ our King to be at the center of our being until we stand before him. Amen.

In Matthew's gospel, this passage is one of Jesus' last teachings before going to the cross. The Human One, Christ the King, comes in his glory with all his angels. Our focus in this passage is the Shepherd-King—our King. Jesus talks about giving to those in need of food, drink, welcome, clothing, nursing care, and visitation. This passage predicts the end time when some will be blessed and others will be cursed.

When we come before Christ, the question will be the same for all of us. What have we done to help others in need? We think and pray to ourselves, “Jesus is there someone today you will send me to that I can help?” It's a perspective we carry with us that shapes and refines our thinking. Our aim is to learn to give more freely and generously.

The Shepherd-King leads us. We see him in every blind man who begs on the corner. We see him among those huddled together around a fire or laying on the grid of a city sidewalk at night to stay warm. We see him holding up a sign asking for money at a busy intersection. We see him near Wesley Seminary as a pregnant woman begging. We see him as a child with a head bowed down and rags on his back. We see him at the bottom of a cement stair case trying to look invisible while people pass by.

We see him in the pictures of Africa leading his family. They're all naked; they have no shoes, no food, and no water as they walk across an arid desert. We see him in a coffee house crying and lonely. We see him sleeping on a park bench shivering. Jesus, he had nowhere to lay his head either. Jesus said, "I was hungry and you didn't give me food to eat. I was thirsty and you didn't give me anything to drink. I was a stranger and you didn't welcome me. I was naked and you didn't give me clothes to wear. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't visit me." Jesus is the locus of this passage.

What is our response to the poor? Do we forget at times how interconnected and interdependent we are in the human race? It's praying with someone who you see crying at a restaurant, it's buying a homeless person a meal and going in for them to get it because they're not allowed inside. It's giving someone money, a grace bag, a car, or giving them a call on the phone, or making a Christmas stocking to fill with things they need.

The deeds of mercy listed in this passage are things we all can do. Giving someone food, giving a drink of water, welcoming a foreigner to the country, buying clothing, providing nursing care, or doing visitation. It's the people we meet outside of these walls. We don't need a project at the end of the year to do this—we can do it year round. It's called HOW TO REACH NEW PEOPLE. We

may never see them again, but that doesn't matter. Jesus said to provide for them—to care and to listen to their story by being present.

This kind of giving in a person isn't calculating or looking for a position. They're vigilant everywhere they go. They're watchful with their new pair of lens that Christ has given them. These new pair of lens, they sharpen their minds to watch for someone in need. These new pair of lens, they fill their hearts with more love every day as they give it out. They have one thing in mind—others. The more they think about others the less they think about themselves. They're determined to be more and more changed by God's love.

It's interesting how those who were helping attend to the needs of Christ said this. 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we see you as a stranger and welcome you, or naked and give you clothes to wear? When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' They didn't know they were serving and helping Christ. *The more they cared for others the more they became like the one they were helping—Christ.* Christ said, "When you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me."

The ones who ignored the homeless and hungry said this. "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and didn't do anything to help you?" So if they had known it was Christ they would've helped right?

Do we need a position, a platform, or publicity to help others? HOW TO REACH NEW PEOPLE is *so much more* than bringing people into the four walls of this church. When someone says "We haven't seen any results" I want to say who has Christ led you to minister to this week? Did you lend a listening ear? Did you pray with them? I believe it's a learning process. It's reeducating our minds.

It's understanding that people need people who are willing to spend time with them—not to just get them onto our membership roll, but to be there when they're going through a tough time in their lives.

The active process of HOW TO REACH NEW PEOPLE changes your heart to minister any time, any place, anywhere. You don't need a platform or a position. Churches grow when each person takes responsibility and ministers to others expecting nothing in return. People have to see our genuine concern for them or they'll write us off in two seconds.

Who are we sharing our love and compassion with? Is it with just our friends or a nameless face we don't know? Are we developing relationships with people just to translate them into a church member? If we're helping people to only up our attendance or to pander our self-esteem then it could be we're on the goat team. I'm no judge. I'm a guide and a leader. I order the spiritual life of this church. That's why you hired me—to lead you in ways that further and foster your spiritual growth.

The help a Christian disciple gives to others continually is a help that sides with the approval of God; it's given only for the sake of helping. There's no motive, there's only doing the work of Christ. The ones who are called blessed by Christ in this passage are the ones who serve differently than the kings of this world. They see Christ in every needy face. They hear the cries of those asking for bread. They give to strangers, who become acquaintances, who become friends.

Let's pray. Merciful Lord, on this Thanksgiving Sunday let us give thanks to you for you've filled our hearts with grace and love for all humanity. Help us learn how to reach new people in the way you do and with the motives you have. That we would minister to those in need with no agenda, but from God's love that flows into our heart with no strings attached. Move us to give expecting nothing in

return. Inspire us to care and listen to others that need us. Lead us God through the instruction of those who can inspire us if we'll only listen. Change our hearts and help us be like you. Amen.