

Matthew 25.31-46 Proper 29 - Give to the least of my brethren

Where do you see God?

Most of us have a notion of what the end of the world will be like. Matthew's depiction has Jesus coming down from heaven on a cloud with angels by His side. At this time Jesus opens the gates of Heaven to some, but points an accusing finger to others showing them the way to Hell and eternal punishment. I don't know about you but I think this is a pretty scary portrayal of judgment day with sheep going one way, goats going another and people not knowing what they did wrong.

I think that it is safe to assume that we will not be around when the world actually comes to an end and Jesus appears in everlasting glory. More than likely we will meet Jesus at our death when He guides us to our Heavenly home. I also think that each of us probably has an idea of what that meeting will be like. My daughter believes that when we die we will review our lives with God at our side. During this time will be given the opportunity to stop this "videotape" at any point and can ask God why certain events were allowed to happen. I asked her if that were true, wouldn't God also have the opportunity to stop our "life review" and ask us why **we** did certain things or acted in a certain way? After all, fair is fair.

Today we celebrate the feast of Christ the King. On Christ the King Sunday, Christians recognize and worship Christ as king of heaven and earth for all time without challenge and without end. In today's gospel this Heavenly king looks upon all those who honor Him and He rewards those who have **unknowingly** followed His command. He welcomes into the heavenly kingdom those individuals whose love was **so true** they did not even realize when they were being generous.

Christ the King Sunday is the last Sunday of the Church's liturgical calendar. During the year the gospels taught us different lessons of how to live a good and godly life. A couple of weeks ago we heard the parable of the bridesmaids and learned that we must always be prepared because we do not know when Jesus will appear. Last week we heard about the faithful servants and how they increased the talents that the king gave them. The lesson there was that we should not waste the gifts we have been given. But today's gospel gives us a good summery of the lesson, which I believe is at the core of everything that Jesus preached. This gospel reminds us how God wants us to live our lives and act toward one another. Today's gospel is really asking the question, "Do we know where we can find God?" And that, my brothers and sisters, is the hardest lesson of all.

Where do we see God? There are so many different answers to that question. I see God in a sunset or sunrise, I see God in the beauty of the mountains, I see God when I think about the great expanse of the universe and so on and so on. These are all very legitimate answers because the wonders of God's creation are incredibly overwhelming. But this gospel does not want us focus on the obvious places of grandeur and splendor where God is certainly present. This gospel invites us is to look for God in places where the Almighty may be hidden. We are in awe at the magnificence of nature, but are we humbled when we see God in the face of suffering people? Do we see God in a person who is longing for our touch? We are challenged to find God in our everyday lives. **But why is this so hard?!** One answer is that we have become very selective as to whom we really believe and accept as our neighbor. Some would say the world would be a better place if we were all the same. Wouldn't it be easier to love our neighbor if we all pretty much looked the same, thought the same way and believed the same things? But God's knew better. We were created to be beautiful, individual mosaic pieces that when joined together create the wonder of the kingdom. And in the eyes of God no one piece is better or more important than another. God loves all his children equally and unconditionally.

Another reason we do not see the face of God in our neighbor is because very often the only face that we actually look at is our own. We have become so preoccupied with our own problems, worries, and disappointments that we don't have the time or the inclination to look outward.

When I was little, my family and I lived in an apartment building in the South Bronx. There were a lot of people living in that building but almost everybody knew everybody else. None of us had much money. In fact, I didn't know how poor we were. But if someone was in the hospital, a new baby was born, someone lost their job, or help of any kind was needed, the neighbors would make sure that the family was helped. We did not name it, but we were a community. We did not know it, but by caring for these people we were being the hands of God. Unfortunately this is a thing of the past. How many of us do not even know who our next-door neighbor is, let alone what joys or hardships they are experiencing? And sadly this is the mindset we are passing on to our children and grandchildren. We must bring back caring and communal intimacy. How do we do that? Each and every one of us must look out and be aware of each other's needs and not simply our own. All a person might need from you is a smile, a wave or anything that acknowledges their existence. We need to become aware that every

situation we are in, every person we meet is an opportunity to encounter God. And in that encounter God can work miracles. And what is extraordinary, **we** are the instruments used to produce those wonders.

The Kingdom of God is right here and right now. This reality is something that we need to put in our minds and never forget. We do not have wait until Jesus comes in glory on the last day to get an evaluation of our lives. We can and should glorify Him every day by the way we **live** our lives. Never forget that Jesus is king, but he was a servant-King. Jesus' kingship is one of power, but also of humility.

Therefore we must try harder to see God not only in a sunrise, but in every person we meet. The world will not get better if we don't change it. And no one can do it alone; we have to do it together. Wouldn't it be incredible if on our last day Jesus Christ was able to say to each and every one of us "Thank you because you never let me go hungry, you always clothed me, you always comforted me. Thank you for always loving me."

Amen