

# He'll Get Your Goat! Matthew 25:31-46

Christ the King Rev. Bill Mosley 11/21/2020

Mexico City has a subway. Bill Rishel said that when he was there in school, the subway was his main transportation. During rush hours people are so crowded in the underground tunnels that every so often someone is pushed onto the electrified tracks & dies. During one such busy afternoon, Rishel & his friend Phil were in the subway waiting for a train, & a blind boy about 13 years old was selling pencils in one of the corners of the ramp. He was shoved & his pencils went flying. Phil, a good Midwestern - type, thought nothing of bending down & picking up those pencils he was able to reach. He put them back into the blind boy's cup. The boy turned to him & said "Are you Jesus?" Phil didn't know how to respond to the boy's inquiry. 142

A boy who lives in Harlem was telling about how much a treat it is if, at the end of the month, there is enough money, he gets to go to the pizza place near his home and buy 3 pieces of pizza for his Mom, Dad & himself. While walking home one day, he comes upon a home-less man who is very cold - so cold he can't even ask for anything. The boy reaches inside his 'take-home' bag and gives the man one of the three pieces of pizza. Someone asks the child: "Did you get in trouble when you got home?" The child responds: "Why should I get in trouble? My parents have always taught me to share." AMAZING GRACE

In the parable of THE LAST JUDGMENT or The Sheep and the Goats, Jesus describes the ultimate final exam. What question will be on the exam? Don't we all want to know how it is we'll be judged on the last day? Jesus tells us here.

The trouble with it is, **it's easy to hear the wrong question.**

Jesus says, The king will separate the sheep from the goats, the sheep on his right, & the goats on his left. We still haven't heard the question on the exam nor have we been able to answer. He will say to those on his right, "Come O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry & you gave me food, I was thirsty & you gave me drink, I was a stranger & you welcomed me, I was naked & you clothed me, I was sick & you visited me, I was in prison & you came to me."

That's it! That's the question! And the answer is the one we've been giving our whole lives! What a relief to know we can do something!

But wait, that's not all. The righteous are assured of salvation, that is, life with God. But they question it. Wait -- **WHEN** did we do all this for you? And the King answers, "As you did it to the least of my family, you did it to me!" Now I think the real answer to the question is this one. There's something you have to do, all right, but you have to do it with the right attitude, and with the right relationship to the King. **Without noticing that you are doing it.**

To the ones on the left he says, Get away from me! I was there in the hungry and the thirsty and the needy, the stranger and the prisoner, and you didn't help me! The condemned say, Wait a minute! **WHEN** did we not do these things? We thought we did, and we have receipts and tax deductions right here to prove it!

**The king will say, Well, you missed a time or 2, & when I was there in the least likely persons, victims & homeless, & sickly, & you shunned them, you didn't help me.**

Could you give away your only piece of pizza, & think nothing of it? Would you stoop to help a blind person in danger? How do you answer that blind man's query, "Are you Jesus?" The answer is, **no, but I act in his name. The blind man has Jesus inside him, & so does anyone who helps him, & thinks nothing of it.**

The distinction between sheep and goats refers to people who have a relationship with God and those who don't -- people who are sheep of the Good Shepherd and people who are merely goats.

That's the most important part of this parable -- to be sheep under authority of the Good Shepherd. **The separation takes place before either group is told what they have or haven't done. It is not their "good deeds" that brings the blessing, it is because they are sheep, God's people, living under authority of the Good Shepherd. But as sheep, they naturally did such good things for the needy & also to Christ.**

There appears to be no grace -- there only seems to be justice in which the results of sin are punishment & the result of goodness is a reward.

But look closely. **Neither the sheep nor the goats can identify what brought them into judgment or salvation.** Sheep & goats are amazed and perplexed, even ignorant of the fact that they are sheep.

Most of us have had a similar type of "surprise". Someone comes up to us & says, "What you did for me sure helped me a lot." or "What you said to me had a powerful influence on my life." While they are saying this, we are trying to remember what we said or did that was so great. Often we don't know what we are doing -- and we have served Christ in the least of these. And that makes us one of the sheep.

On the other hand, if we think we are doing a great job, we might be surprised to hear about what we haven't done. I know of lots of things I'm proud of, & I hope the Lord has those on my list. But that makes me one of the goats.

**The truth is each of us is part sheep and part goat, both Saint and Sinner, and the separation will be to take the goat part out & make you all sheep, all one with Christ.**

*I'm looking forward to having my Lord get my goat.*

**Many people think of "salvation" as simply a reservation at the heavenly hotel when I die in the sweet by & by. What I read in scriptures concerns itself with a change in life: There can be a change in understanding one's self -- you are not all sufficient -- you need the help of other people -- Christ is in you and through you, others encounter Christ.**

There can be change from caring for others as a "good work" = earning points with God, to a naturally produced fruit growing out of a changed nature. They don't realize the good they've done because it is so "natural".

I remember a friend active in Alcoholics Anonymous; she used to say "you can't think your way into right acting; you have to act your way into right thinking."

Being right with God, getting the one question on the final exam right, is both how you act, & how you think & feel. **According to Jesus, how you'll feel is surprised.** Living in Jesus' name, it'll be the right kind of surprise.

Lord, help us to know and do your love for the world in a natural way, that we may say no to whatever makes it more difficult to say Yes to you.