

March 30, 2021

Read Matthew 25

Key verse: Matthew 25:37

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?"

Blinded by Love

I saw a bumper sticker one that said, "Jesus is coming: Look busy." That short phrase speaks a lot about our nature, and the kind of relationship so many people have with Jesus. A lot of folks feel that they need to "put on a show" for Jesus, impress him, and make him believe that they're faithfully following his commandments, even when he's not around. It betrays the kind of 'stick-and-carrot' mindset that we have about God, that *if* we do what God wants us to do, we will be rewarded with eternal life, which means that it denies God's grace, which is the only "qualification" we have for eternal life. We still think we have to earn something that has been given to us freely.

Today's key verse shows us what our relationship with Jesus should look like. Those who are righteous (i.e. stand in a *right* relationship with God) are those who are not even aware that as they serve others they are serving Jesus. They're not doing anything to impress Jesus or earn his favor; they are simply responding to the needs of others – ALL others – out of love. They are transformed by the grace of God which says to them "I love you so much that I would never abandon you...EVER." And so there is no need to earn eternal life. There is no need to meet the minimum requirements. Jesus has already died for your sins. You are invited to enter his kingdom, now and in the future.

When we embrace the truth of God's radical love, we have no need to prove anything. We are simply invited to respond in kind by loving those around us. And what about the fate of the unrighteous, those who act in compassion to others? Do they get cast into eternal punishment? Well, Jesus used a lot of hyperbole; I think he speaks sternly to those whose hearts are hardened, warning them of eternal punishment, but actually the unrighteous are already suffering their own punishment because they're so far separated from the love of God and the love of others that they can never know the true joy that true love brings us. Through Jesus God has freed us to truly love all people, and in so doing we show our love for God.

Prayer: Lord God, your love is beyond our understanding. Our love has too many strings attached to it; we serve others either to impress you or to receive something in return from you or from others. Your love simply gives without taking and without expectation from us. Thank you! Help us to know that kind of love more and more, so that we, like the righteous in today's reading, truly love all people. Amen.