

***"How Then Shall We Live?"***

Rev. Robert H. Wade

November 20, 2011

Matthew 25:31-46

I love Thanksgiving! A relaxed day....at least after the Turkey Trot....the traditional turkey, mash potatoes, and pecan pie shared with family and friends topped off by remembering the many blessings we enjoy. We are a blessed people and Thanksgiving provides us with the occasion to name our blessings.

Remember that old gospel song...."*Count Your Blessings Name Them One By One?*" What are you blessings...hem one by one....

As we come to worship on this Thanksgiving Sunday, we come giving thanks for Jesus as King of kings, and Lord of lords. For this is *Christ the King* Sunday. Our gospel reading pictures Jesus in his authoritative Kingly role, sitting on his throne judging the peoples of the world. Yes, there will be a judgment day!

**<sup>31</sup>"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. <sup>32</sup>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, <sup>33</sup>and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. <sup>34</sup>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; <sup>35</sup>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, <sup>36</sup>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.'<sup>37</sup> 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? <sup>38</sup>And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? <sup>39</sup>And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' <sup>40</sup>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.'**

**<sup>41</sup>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; <sup>42</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty**

and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> 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.' <sup>44</sup> 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?' <sup>45</sup> 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.' <sup>46</sup> And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

As Jesus comes in his glory and sits on his throne he takes on the role of a shepherd who separates the righteous sheep from the unrighteous goats....the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then he affirms the sheep and invites them, **Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;** <sup>35</sup> **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,** <sup>36</sup> **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.'**

But the sheep were puzzled and questioned when they had ever given food and water to the King, when had they welcomed him, clothed and cared for him and even visited him in prison. They were clueless as to when they might have done such things for the King. The King tells the righteous sheep, "as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Then the King turns to the goats and judges them for *not* doing anything for those who needed help and he sends them into eternal punishment but the righteous sheep were welcomed into eternal life. Now that's a challenging message! What is clear in this judgment scene is that Jesus does not ask the sheep and goats *what they believe*, or *what doctrines they ascribe to* or *how much time they gave to worship, prayer, Bible study or going to committee meetings*. The final question is simply, "*What did you do or didn't do for those in need?*"

This judgment scene was Jesus' wake-up call to those who first heard him preach it and to us who hear it, again, today! "*How will we identify the least of these and how will we respond?*" "*What will we do for the hungry, thirsty, homeless, sick, lonely, shunned, outcast, second class.....what will we do for the least of these?*"

One of the primary reasons we are the church is to reach out beyond ourselves and, here at Fairmont, we have chosen to participate in a number of missions.

Yesterday, *Dave and Marilyn Dickey* were here to load **68** shoeboxes into their car to take to the distribution center for *Operation Christmas Child*. 68 boxes being sent to children around the world so they might have a gift and a touch of hope this Christmas for the least of these.

Several weeks ago our PYC youth went door-to-door right around our church's neighborhood collecting can goods and food supplies from our neighbors who, by the way, responded with over 500 pounds of food. Then this past week *Kim Gunlock, Ken McKenzie* and *Scott King* came to transport all of that food to the South Dayton Food Pantry at Southminster. Each week in our bulletin we are given specific requests for what the Food Pantry needs and we have barrels located around the church to receive your food gifts. *Paul Lamberger, Jan Walters* and *Ken McKenzie* regularly help with the Food Pantry for the least of these.

Recently we received a letter of thanks for Fairmont's support in the Catch the Building Spirit - Habitat for Humanity house we helped build with donations and hands on help. *Dave Keenan* and others from Fairmont have given hundreds of hours to building homes in our community for the least of these.

Many of our members have become involved in serving at the *House of Bread* where the homeless can receive meals and a warm reception. *Bonnie Grieco* helps organize groups to serve the least of these.

You know about our participation in the *Jeremiah's Letter mission* and this year we will be providing Christmas gifts for seven families in our community and you can be a part of making someone's Christmas very special. Talk with *Dave Youngerman* who not only helps with this ministry but is chair of our *Mission Team* for the least of these.

We take offerings like The Thank Offering, The Christmas Joy Offering, One Great Hour of Sharing and Fifth Sunday Mission Projects for the least of these.

Fairmont seeks to be a mission station through which all members can *do* the ministry of Jesus Christ for people in need.....for the least of these! God's church around the world is called to serve the least of these.

(Go to the children & speak to them) Some of you remember meeting my missionary friends *John and Gwen Haspels* who are currently serving the church in Ethiopia. I receive their newsletter called the *Boma Bulletin* and their Thanksgiving issue mentioned Jesus' story of the sheep and goats.....the same story we have heard this morning. (show picture to the children) Quote the Boma Bulletin....

**"Sheep & Goats:** After hearing the story about the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25, the Suri said that the difference between the sheep and the goats is that the goats think only about their own stomachs. The sheep, however, are concerned about the stomachs of others. In response to this teaching, the Suri said, *"God has spoken to us. Let us build a house for Keme Keme."* They did and now a homeless man has a home."

The story of the sheep and goats has motivated God's people through the centuries to be doers of the word and not just hearers only.

The truth is we are all a mix of sheep and goats (sheeps....geeps).....sometimes we think *"I'll help others first,"* and, at other times, we think *"me first."* There is a tug-of-war going on inside us.....me first vs help others. Let's play sheep/goats....

*I've heard of a little girl who asked her mother to buy a few gift cards at McDonalds, so she could give them to hungry people on the street.*

*I've heard of a little boy who asked to earn money by doing extra chores around the house so he could give the money to the Food Pantry. But, after he was given the extra money, he decided to buy a new computer game for himself.*

*I've heard of a little boy who was planning his own birthday party and agreed to asking his friends to bring backpacks full of school supplies rather than birthday gifts for himself.*

*I heard of a little girl who saw her friends laughing at another's girl's clothes in the lunch room and she decided to go and sit with the girl who was being laughed at.*

We need help being sheep and not goats. This is where faith, worship, Bible study, prayer and team meetings come into play.....to give us the mind and heart of Jesus Christ that we might serve the least of these. We need help thinking of other people's stomachs and not our own! This week you will receive an ***Advent devotion guide*** to help you stay close to Jesus during this busy and "me first" season.

Jesus has promised to be our Shepherd and to help us do the right thing by helping others with our time, our abilities and our money. We cannot be sheep without the Shepherd's help. I thank God for Jesus Christ.....our Great Shepherd. May the Shepherd's Psalm remind you that the Lord is your Shepherd to help you be the sheep who love the least of these! ***Aiden Baer*** will help us remember that we have a Great Shepherd to follow!

***Aiden Baer*** to recite the 23rd Psalm

Amen