

The Sheep and Goats

Lesson 06 in the series "Parables"

A. Jesus told a parable of a shepherd separating sheep from goats to explain how he will separate faithful followers from unfaithful people.

"But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.' "Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?' "And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!' "Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. For I was hungry, and you didn't feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn't give me a drink. I was a stranger, and you didn't invite me into your home. I was naked, and you didn't give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't visit me.' "Then they will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?' "And he will answer, 'I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.' "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life." Matthew 25:31-46 (NLT)

Note: Sheep recognize, listen to, and obey their master's voice while goats are stubborn and resist being told what to do.

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." John 10:27 (NLT)

"Anyone who doesn't love me will not obey me. And remember, my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me." John 14:24 (NLT)

B. Three ways this parable applies to us.

1. Faith without action is not faith.

"What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, 'Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well'—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. Now someone may argue, 'Some people have faith; others have good deeds.' But I say, 'How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds.' You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless?" James 2:14-20 (NLT)

Note: Good works are not the cause of salvation but the effect of salvation.

"...We love each other because he loved us first." 1 John 4:7 (NLT)

Life Application: "Since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus... and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings.... let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." Hebrews 10:19-24 (NIV)

2. Faithful people follow Jesus' example in loving others.

"Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God." Ephesians 5:1-2 (NLT)

"Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." John 13:35 (NLT)

"Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses? Jesus replied, 'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments." Matthew 22:36-40 (NLT)

"...If we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see?" 1 John 4:20 (NLT)

Note: When we care for those less fortunate we are demonstrating our love for Jesus.

"Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward them for what they have done." Proverbs 19:17 (NIV)

Life Application: "Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone." Galatians 6:10 (NLT)

3. Each one of us will stand before God one day, and our lives will be examined and judged.

"...Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For the Scriptures say, 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will declare allegiance to God.' Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God." Romans 14:10-12 (NLT)

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive his due for the things done in the body, whether good or bad." 2 Corinthians 5:10 (NLT)

Life Application: "Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith." 2 Corinthians 13:5 (NLT)

"So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do." 2 Thessalonians 1:11 (NLT)

Discussion Questions

1. What can we learn from the following passages about judgment day?
 - Revelation 20:11-15
 - 1 Corinthians 4:5
 - Romans 14:10-12
 - Acts 17:31

2. Read 1 John 3:17 and John 13:34-35. How is our love for others a reflection of our love for God? Why can loving others be so difficult? What does it mean to let God love others through you?

3. Read Hebrews 10:19-24. How can we “spur one another on toward love and good deeds”? What are some good deeds we can do together as a group? For what individual or group can we do those “good deeds”?

4. Read 2 Corinthians 13:5. What test can you give yourself to see if your faith is genuine? Read 139:23. Have you every asked God to test you before? Why are tests important? Why do most of us hate taking tests?

5. Read and discuss the following verses on helping the poor:
 - Proverbs 19:17
 - Acts 20:35
 - Isaiah 58:10
 - Matthew 34-40
 - Proverb 14:31

Why does God care about the way we treat those who are less fortunate than us? Have you ever helped people who are less fortunate than you on a mission trip? Have you ever thought about going on a mission trip? What is stopping you from going?