

HOW DO YOU SERVE CHRIST?

Most of us have it pretty good. We have warm houses, enough food to eat, fairly good health, more than enough clothes to wear, and don't have any particular problem with the law. We hear about the starvation in various parts of the world, we hear about the homeless even here in the USA but none of really know anyone who is homeless, we see and read about terrible diseases that people contract and realize that our prison systems are full and overflowing; but, these things are really far removed from our lives. We tend to be insulated from such things. Most of would agree that this description is correct and that is really the way we want it. We want to be insulated from such problems. But, is that really the way it ought to be? I'm not advocating that we become homeless, sick, naked or get thrown in jail. That's not the point. The question is should we remain so insulated from people who do have such problems that we are of no help to them. I think that we all realize that, in Christianity, the idea of an inner goodness that never expresses itself in being good to and helping other people just doesn't make a lot of sense. Sometimes we tip toe around the issue of the need to become involved in doing good because we might be concerned about being accused of advocating a "salvation by works" philosophy. I wonder if this in not just a convenient excuse for not getting involved. We know that we cannot be saved by doing works and we ought to also know that the reason that we were saved and left here on earth is that we will do the works that God had for us to do. Sometimes people wonder what those "works" are. What we will look at today gets pretty specific as for what the Lord will hold us accountable.

MATT 25:31-33 There is some controversy among Bible scholars as to which Judgement Christ is referring. Some distinguish this from the Great White Throne Judgement. In this Judgement Seat of Christ Judgement there is no mention of resurrection of the dead, the persons judged are living nations, no books are opened, and three classes are present: sheep, goats, and brethren. The time is the return of Christ (when He comes in His glory) and the location is here on earth.

Once all the nations are gather there, they will be divided into two groups. It will be done the way that shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. The shepherd can simply look at the these animals and immediately tell the difference. In the same way Jesus knows our nature and can see what kind of persons we are. Others may not not be able to tell if we are sheep or goats, but the Good Shepherd knows.

There is not general agreement as to who are the sheep, goats and brethren. Some argue that the brethren are the Jewish Remnant that will go through the Tribulation period. It is thought that the Church will have already been raptured and gone to heaven. The nations would then be made up of the non-Christian who are alive and these will be judged according to how they treated the Jews. Others believe that the brethren are followers of Jesus. We don't have to know who all the players are to discover what Jesus thinks is important about how we interact with each other. This information comes out clearly as He tell the difference in behavior of the sheep and the goats.

MATT 25:34-40 Notice that the group on the right is invited to "inherit the kingdom". Who can inherit the kingdom? If this is the Kingdom of God (and I think that it is safe to assume this), then only those born of the Spirit can enter the Kingdom. Notice that Jesus also states that this kingdom has been prepared from the foundation of the world. In other words, it is part of God's original plan. This should remind us of the fact that the works that God wants the saints to do have also been determined from the beginning of time. (See Eph 2:8-10)

HUNGER: How many times have you heard about the Chinese, Japanese, Indians, or communist countries sending food to areas of the world that

have severe hunger problems? Who responds to such needs? The response come, for the most part, from those countries that have had significant influence from Christianity. The Christian influence is primarily responsible for social concern of this sort in our own nation.

One of the things that we should not forget is that physical hunger is not the only type of hunger. There is tremendous spiritual hunger that needs to be satisfied with the truth about who God is and what man's relationship should be toward Him. We need to be sharing Jesus with spiritually hungry people since He is the Bread of Life.

THIRST: People living near a desert area can relate to real thirst a lot more than we can. The picture that probably came to people's mind was that of someone without any water in the middle of the desert and someone comes along and shares his water with the one who has none. There is a risk involved in doing this sharing--the most obvious is if you share what you have you may not have enough for your self.

On the spiritual side, we don't have to be concerned about running out if we share the Living Waters with others because the Source of this Water is found in Jesus Himself.

STRANGER: There is a basic distrust of foreigners and people that we do not know. There is a certain amount of risk and not a lot of perceived gain in helping someone that you do not know. To help such people means disregarding self and concentrating on others. Most of us are reluctant to share the gospel with those who are different from us (in whatever way we define different).

NAKED: Most people you and I know have closets full of clothes. In the time of Jesus and even today in many areas of the world extra clothes was and is a luxury. To help clothe someone who had nothing would have probably required that the one sharing the clothes give up something that he really needed and could have meant literally taking the clothes off his own back. More importantly, we should be concerned that we and others are clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

SICK: You don't usually find any atheistic organizations that send medical workers to Africa or India to provide free medical help. Most of the medical treatment that was provided in the less developed countries over the past 100 years was a result of Christian missions.

On the spiritual side, anyone who has not accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior is spiritually ill and needs Christians to minister health to them in the form of the gospel message that Jesus saves.

PRISON: There is a growing tragedy in our nation. We can't build prisons fast enough to get the criminal element off the street. Fully one fourth of all black men in the US can expect to spend some time in prison. The tragedy doesn't end there, those that go to prison can be expected to return because they come out worse than they went in. We are spend nearly \$30,000 a year on each prisoner and we are not doing any good except that we are providing temporary separation from society. If there were Christian input into the lives of those in prison, then we might have a chance to see people come out of prison being better people than when they went in. We sing of "rescue the perishing" but not much is happened for most of us.

Notice that Jesus said that they did these things to Him. The people were unaware of what impact their good deeds would have. They were not doing it for reward, but they were doing it for love's sake. This genuine concern for others is a natural (supernatural) outcome of being a child of God. It should make an everlasting impression on us that Jesus views such concern as being directed toward Himself.

MATT 25:41-46 The word depart used here means to "keep on departing". Those that do not feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick or visit those in prison have been walking away from Christ and have not repented to walk toward Him. When we are unconcerned for others is usually because we are overly concerned about ourselves. We should be concerned about our lives, however, when that concern becomes the overriding consideration in what we do, then we are acting as Satan did.

The tendency toward selfishness is very strong and is a manifestation of the "old nature". The love of God is stronger and through it we must overcome and live victorious lives and let that victory show in the way we serve Christ.