



See Through God's Eyes

Matthew 25:31–46

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

November 26, 2017

Thought for the Week

Scriptures - Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17 • 1 Corinthians 14:20,26,28 • Matthew 25:31-46

It often seems to me that there is a certain feeling of surprise and sadness when we reach the end of anything in our life. Oddly enough, we may not be prepared for this moment; there are still too many tasks left for us to do, too many mysteries undiscovered, too many surprises still yet unexplored. The human psyche has the sense that we are still capable of more knowledge and deeper insight.

There is a quote from the poet T.S. Eliot that seems to describe this feeling so well: "We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time."

Mysteriously, it often appears that at the end of our efforts we are back where we started but we also have a new insight into whatever it is we were exploring. Perhaps it has something to do with the mind's capacity to delve deeper and endlessly into any quest for knowledge. As Eliot writes: "...the end is our beginning."

Of course, we are now nearing the end of another earthly year: autumn reminds us of the year coming to an end. Life in so many forms is dying, and yet instinct reminds us that this is not truly the end. In a few months spring will bring everything back to life and all will seem renewed. We will have been richly blessed once again. This is the way of all the earth, a tale of death and resurrection.

For many of us who follow the Christian calendar, we have also reached the end of another liturgical year, that long list of celebrations and explorations into our spiritual life. We have arrived at the last Sunday in the Christian cycle.

Christians of many different denominations have been celebrating the life of Christ in their liturgical rites since last Advent: We have moved in one giant cycle from Advent to Christmas, to Lent, to Holy Week, Easter and Pentecost. Spliced into these great celebrations we also remember the many dedicated Christians, both ministers and dedicated lay people. Finally, Christians observe that long list of ordinary Sundays that recall Christ's death and resurrection in the context of their daily lives. All this proceeds in an orderly manner until once again we reach the first Sunday of Advent (next week) and the beginning of another year of grace. T.S. Eliot penned a beautiful insight: once we set out on life's path, there is no turning around until we find ourselves back where we started as though for the first time...but so differently!

Happy Birthday Lenore (12/5)

"Who are the 'least of these' in the Bible?"

Matthew 25:31–46, where Jesus speaks of those in need:

"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 foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the **least of these** my brothers, you did it to me.'"

The "least of these" refers to those in a variety of needy situations. They include the hungry, thirsty, impoverished, sick, and imprisoned. In this context, Jesus is speaking to those on His right, that is, the righteous. The needy are called Christ's "brothers"; thus, the reference is to the righteous helping fellow disciples. Jesus said that those who cared for such individuals were not merely serving other people. They were serving Him.

In the same passage, the opposite is also noted. The narrative concludes with Jesus condemning those who saw believers in need and yet did not help. He says,

"For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'"

Jesus connected service to the needy with eternal rewards and punishments. Though salvation is by faith alone apart from good deeds (Ephesians 2:8–9), the redeemed will be "eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:14), including extending charity to fellow believers in difficult situations. Those whose lives are marked by apathy toward the needy show they have not been transformed by the grace of Jesus Christ.

God has always shown a special concern for the poor and needy (Psalm 35:10). It should come as no surprise that He expects His followers to do the same, especially toward those of the family of God (Galatians 6:10). What is surprising about the "least of these" is that our service is ultimately not to the poor, but to Christ Himself.