



Sunday School Lesson for July 31, 2005  
Released on July 27, 2005

**"Meeting Human Needs"**

**Printed Text:** Matthew 25:31-46

**Devotional Reading:** Luke 6:27-31

**Time:** A.D. 30

**Place:** Mount of Olives

**Matthew 25:31-46**

**31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:**

**32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:**

**33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.**

**34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:**

**35 For I was ahungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:**

**36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.**

**37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee ahungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?**

**38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?**

**39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?**

**40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.**

**41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye**

**cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:**

**42 For I was ahungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:**

**43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.**

**44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee ahungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?**

**45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.**

**46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.**

### **Today's Aim**

**Facts:** To show that our spiritual condition is revealed by how we treat the needy people we meet.

**Principle:** To show that as Christians we are accountable to God for the way in which we treat the needy among us.

**Application:** To urge believers to seek opportunities to help the needy.

### **Introduction**

"All rise!" It is a familiar courtroom scene. The spectators suddenly stop their nervous chatter and stand up. The defendant, lawyers, and jurors come to attention. All eyes are fixed on the robed figure who strides importantly into the room. The judge takes a seat at an elevated desk, looking down on the proceedings. In this courtroom the judge is in complete control.

One day the command, "All rise!" will be given for the final time. On that day it will not be addressed to a few dozen spectators in some local court; it will be addressed to the whole world. The dead will rise from their graves; then the living saints will join them. Together they will meet the Lord in the air (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

On the last great day of human history, the Lord Jesus will sit in judgment over all the earth. He will judge in behalf of the Father, and it is the Father's will that the Son exercise this judgment (see John 5:22, 27, 30). When Jesus considers the lives of people, one thing He will be looking for as evidence of faith in Him is how they have treated their fellow humans. Have they cared about the needy? Have they done anything to meet human needs? In today's lesson, the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, Jesus shows how important He thinks this is. In His eyes, when we do an act of kindness to one of the least of His brethren, we do it unto Him.

## **Lesson Background**

Sometime during his final week--probably on Tuesday--Jesus taught in the temple and answered challenges by various religious leaders (see Matthew 21-23). Later, He left the temple and taught His disciples privately at the Mount of Olives. He told them what to expect in the future, both at the fall of Jerusalem (a.d. 70) and at the time of the second coming (see Matthew 24).

Then Jesus told three parables to show His disciples that they needed to be ready for His coming. The first was the Parable of the Ten Virgins. Five were foolish and five were wise (see Matthew 25:1-13). Some were ready when the bridegroom finally arrived; some were not. "Watch therefore," said Jesus, "for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (v. 13).

The second story was the Parable of the Talents (see Matthew 25:14-30). When a certain master went away to "a far country," he gave each of his servants a number of talents (money). Upon his return, he summoned the servants to find out what they had accomplished. The faithful and industrious were rewarded, but a "wicked and slothful" servant was cast into the outer darkness, where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The third parable was the climax of all that Jesus had been teaching about the end times. The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats is a dramatic picture of Judgment Day. Jesus sits as King on a glorious throne and separates the nations into two groups, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. What will be interesting for our study of this passage is the basis on which Jesus will evaluate and categorize people. We will take note of the importance of meeting human needs, and we will consider how the necessity of good deeds is in harmony with the Bible's teaching of salvation by grace.

## **Judging the Righteous**

### **1. When will the incident that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 25:31 take place?**

Studying prophecy is not just about studying the details of prophecy. It is about knowing what is coming and having that knowledge affects how we live today. Today's text places great emphasis on how we live today in light of future events. This passage reveals this fact more than any other passage in Matthew's Gospel.

The incident in verse 25 refers to the end-time event prior to the establishment of the millennium kingdom. This passage refers to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus came into the world the first time as Savior. When He comes back again, He will judge all mankind. No one know when Jesus will come back, but we can be certain that He will come again.

First, the rapture will take place, in which all Christians will be taken directly to heaven (1 Thess. 4:13-17). This event will be followed by the tribulation period described in the Book of Revelation. Many people will turn to Christ for salvation during the tribulation. At the conclusion of the tribulation, Christ will come back as

judge of mankind. The remaining text describes what will happen at Jesus' Second Coming.

## **2. How did Jesus refer to the two groups of people (v.32-33)?**

When it comes to Jesus Christ, a person is either for Jesus or against Him (Mat. 12:30). There is no middle ground when it comes to Jesus. Jesus will separate the believers (the sheep) from the unbelievers (the goats). Jesus will have no difficulty in accomplishing this task because just as the shepherd knows his sheep, Jesus knows His followers. The sheep will go to his right side, and the goats will go to the left. No one will be able to fool Jesus during the judgment. He will make a correct assessment.

## **3. What message is given to the group at Jesus' right side (v. 34)?**

Once Jesus separates the people, He will speak to those on the right (the sheep) and reward them with the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the earth. In the Bible, the right side is often a sign of honor and authority. These are the people who are followers of Jesus. They know Jesus and Jesus knows them through their personal relationship. This kingdom in this verse refers to the Millennium kingdom where Jesus will reign for a thousand years, and this group will enter the kingdom without dying. These are the saints who survive the tribulation.

## **4. What did Jesus say they did to qualify them for this particular invitation (v. 35-36)?**

In these verses, Jesus describes six actions that they took at one time or another that benefited Him. They fed Him when He was hungry. They gave Him something to drink when He was thirsty. When He was a stranger, they took Him in and cared for Him. When He was naked, they gave Him clothing. When He was sick, they visited Him and nursed Him. When He was in prison, they came to Him. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but Jesus was pointing out the compassion in their hearts. Each need has something to do with survival or quality of survival, and those needs are important to each of us.

## **Evidences of Righteousness**

## **5. Why are they confused and surprised at Jesus' statement (v. 40)?**

The believers wonder when did they do these acts. None of them have never seen Jesus in their lives, much less served him physically. Jesus makes it clear that when they helped the needy, they helped Him. Jesus is often referred to as the "Son of Man." This means that He can relate to mankind. He can relate to the needy because He was needy at one point in His life on earth. He knows how they feel, and He has compassion for them. Jesus is pleased with the believers because they share that same compassion.

## **6. What practical lesson must we learn from this?**

As Christians, it is our responsibility to help those who are in need. The world is full of needy people. Some of them are fellow Christians, but others are unbelievers. It is our responsibility to reach out to everyone. You don't have to go far to find someone who is in need, they are all around us. They are in every community. If every Christian would reach out and help at least one person in need, then we can make a huge impact. Remember, God often uses other people to bring about His blessings.

Jesus was commending those believers in the text for not being self-centered. In the world, people generally live for themselves and usually only for themselves. They don't have any concern for others. Christians must not adopt this same attitude. Jesus requires us to think of others. It is not always convenient for us to help others, especially if we are struggling ourselves. We must also remember that helping the needy is not restricted to just missionaries and local churches; it is our responsibility. Everyone must do his or her part. When we help those who are in need, we are showing the heart of God to them.

Also, when meeting the needs of the needy, it is also good to find out whether the person is a Christian. Showing kindness to a person will soften that person's heart, and that person will be more receptive to the Gospel message. Everyone has the need of receiving Jesus as his or her Lord and Savior.

## **Judging the Unrighteous**

### **7. What is Jesus' message for the ones on His left side (v. 41-43)?**

Jesus has some harsh words for those individuals on the left. They are condemned by Jesus and they will be thrown into the place of everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his demons.

Jesus explains to them that they did not meet His basic needs while the righteous did so. These individuals are self-centered. They are only concerned about themselves and their well-being. They make no effort to reach out to help others. Their hearts are evil and hardened. They lack the ability to have compassion for others. This is evidence of their unbelief.

### **8. Why are the unbelievers surprised and confused by Jesus' statement (v. 44)?**

The unbelievers attempt to defend themselves of Jesus' accusations. As with the believers in verse 40, the unbelievers are also confused and surprised by Jesus' statement. Like the believers in this text, the unbelievers have never seen Jesus. They seem to imply that if they would have saw Jesus in need that they would help him. They will claim that they didn't know what He wanted them to do. There will be no opportunity to make excuses to the king; there has always been an opportunity to find out God's will. God has given us His Word. The Bible is the number one best seller worldwide. Christians are reaching out to all parts of the world through mission trips, television, radio, and the Internet. Everyone has the opportunity to come to Christ, but it will be too late for them.

## **9. How does Jesus explain this decision (v. 45)?**

Just as Jesus view benefiting the needy as benefiting Him, He views rejecting the needy as rejecting Him. Life is not meant to be lived for the benefit of ourselves only. Needy people are all around us, and everyone of us can help in some way. Believers are a part of the same family, the family of God, and we should have a special burden for fellow believers. After all, God is our Father.

The goats showed evidence of their unbelief through their uncaring attitudes, which caused them to have uncaring attitudes towards the needy. All human beings are created in God's image and reflect something of his nature. God takes it very personally when anyone neglects another human being. They cannot blame God for their sentence; it was their decision to turn away from Him in unbelief. This truth cannot be ignored.

## **10. In what sense are we encountering Jesus when we are confronted with someone who is in need?**

Whenever we encounter a person in need, we are encountering Jesus himself. We prove our love for Jesus whenever we show compassion for other people, especially those who are in need.

## **11. What are the two eternal destinies, and what determines one's destiny (v. 46)?**

Throughout Jesus' ministry, He teaches of two destinies that await every human being. Those who accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior will go to heaven. Heaven is where God lives, and believers will live with Him for all eternity. It is described in the Bible as beautiful, place of joy, peace, and contentment. The Book of Revelation provides a detailed description, and we know that God will wipe away all tears, death, and sorrow (21:4). Everything will be new (vs. 5), and we will be with the Lord forever.

On the contrary, Hell is described as a place of eternal torment. Mark 9:42-48 warns that it is a place where fire is never quenched. In that passage, Jesus said it would be better to be disfigured on earth, if that is what it took to stay away from sin, than to enter hell and be punished forever. This place was originally for Satan and his demons, but the unbelievers will be cast there as well. Believers will enjoy eternal life.

Knowing that there are only two destinies for any human being, we should have a sense of urgency to meet the greatest need that anyone will have, and that is the need for Jesus as their Lord and Savior. That need can only be met while a person is alive on this earth. Once a person dies, that person's eternal destiny is sealed permanently.

In addition, we can also meet a person's physical needs to ease any pain we can. We may not be able to meet every need on this earth, but we should remember to have compassion on them just as Jesus has compassion on us.

## **Conclusion**

As it has been wisely observed, "Good deeds are the fruit, not the root, of the tree of salvation." We dare not think that good deeds produce salvation; instead, it is salvation that produces good deeds. When our faith is real and our hearts are in tune with God, we will naturally reach out to share God's love. On the other hand, if we claim to walk with Jesus but have no concern for the needy, something is seriously wrong. We could say that there is a mismatch between profession and action.

Jesus truly cared about meeting human needs. Even though He came primarily to meet spiritual needs, He took time to meet physical needs as well. The miracles prove it. Look at how He changed water into wine for the wedding at Cana (see John 2:1-11) or when He multiplied loaves and fish to feed the five thousand (see John 6:5-11). The marvel of the great miracles must not cause us to overlook the motive of simple compassion (Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; and 20:34). When Christ healed the sick and the lepers, it was because He cared. A loving heart cannot help but be moved by human needs.

Jesus said that a tree could be known by its fruit. Bad trees produce bad fruit; good trees produce good fruit (see Matthew 7:16-20). The way we live our lives--specifically the way we treat people in need--is a clear indication of the state of our hearts. Bad, worthless trees are cut down (Luke 13:9.)

The challenge of the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats is not just to force ourselves to do more deeds of mercy. The challenge, rather, is to have our hearts so much in tune with God that we naturally try to relieve human suffering. If we are sincerely motivated by God's Spirit, then whenever we see a need we will reach out in love to help meet it. It will be a natural outgrowth of our Christian love.

## **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank you for meeting our needs on a daily basis. We pray that you will make us more sensitive to the needs of other individuals. Soften our hearts so that we will have a heart of compassion for those who are in need. Lead us to someone who we can serve. We pray that our kindness will be evidence for someone to seek Jesus as their Lord and Savior if that person is not saved, thus meeting that person's greatest need. We pray this prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

## **Thought to Remember**

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

## **Anticipating Next Week's Lesson**

In our lesson next week we will see how Jesus, as the promised Messiah, ministered to needy people.

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