



The Sheep and the Goats

Matthew 25:31–46

Main thought: Jesus teaches that the way we respond to people in need reveals the condition of our hearts and our relationship with Him.

1. Jesus Comes as King and Judge

Verses 31–33

Jesus describes His return in glory. He will sit on His throne, and all nations will gather before Him. As a shepherd separates sheep from goats, He will separate the righteous from the unrighteous.

The emphasis is on Jesus' authority to judge. People may misunderstand our motives or be impressed by our appearance, but Jesus knows our hearts and sees how we live.

Discussion: How should knowing that we will answer to Jesus affect our daily choices?

2. The Righteous Demonstrate Compassion

Verses 34–36

The King welcomes those on His right into the kingdom prepared for them. He identifies six ways they showed care:

- They fed the hungry.
- They gave drink to the thirsty.
- They welcomed the stranger.
- They clothed those in need.
- They cared for the sick.
- They visited those in prison.

These acts made their compassion visible. They noticed suffering and responded with what they could offer.

Discussion: Which of these needs do we see around us, and how can we respond?

3. Jesus Identifies Himself With Those Receiving Care

Verses 37–40

The righteous ask when they had seen Jesus in these circumstances. The King explains: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Their service mattered to Jesus even when they did not realize they were serving Him.

Christians understand “these brothers and sisters of mine” in different ways, including particular reference to Jesus’ disciples. The central emphasis is clear: Jesus takes personally the treatment of those He identifies with.

We should never assume that someone’s poverty, illness, imprisonment, or lack of status makes that person less worthy of care.

Discussion: How would our treatment of others change if we remembered that Jesus sees and values our response?

4. Neglect Is a Serious Failure

Verses 41–45

Those on the left are confronted with the help they failed to give. They saw the same kinds of needs but did not respond.

Their question suggests that they did not recognize Jesus in those circumstances. Yet their failure to recognize Him did not excuse their neglect.

This challenges us to examine more than the wrong things we have done. We must also consider the good we have knowingly left undone.

Discussion: What excuses sometimes keep us from helping when we have an opportunity?

5. Our Response Has Eternal Significance

Verse 46

Jesus ends with two outcomes: eternal punishment and eternal life. His words call for serious self-examination.

This passage should not be reduced to a system of earning salvation through good deeds. The kingdom is described as an inheritance. Yet Jesus makes clear that compassionate action matters: a life shaped by faith should show love toward others.

Discussion: What does this passage reveal about the connection between what we believe and how we live?

Personal Application

Ask yourself:

- Am I noticing people in need?
- Have I become comfortable overlooking someone?
- Does my conduct reflect the compassion of Christ?
- What specific act of care can I offer this week?

Closing prayer:

Lord Jesus, examine our hearts and forgive our neglect. Help us notice those who need care and respond with compassion. Let our faith be evident in how we treat others. Amen.