

The Right of the King
Matthew 25:34-36

February 25, 2018

34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.

For me, verses thirty one through forty six are what ministry is all about. It is the heart of the gospel. It identifies the reality of Christianity, how we are to put our faith into action. It is the essence of faith; a scripture to live by. Jesus tells the story of the end of time gathering of the nations before his throne. For today I have chosen to read versus thirty four through thirty six but the story is Matthew 25:31-46.

The title is *The Right of the King*. It is intentionally ambiguous. Jesus, the shepherd, the king on the throne has the right to judge. It is **The Right of the King** to judge and the righteous are placed on **The Right of the King**. It is a lesson on righteousness, the criteria for determining righteousness, and who gets to call it - that is who gets to specify what righteousness is and who the righteous are.

In the Scripture the king is the Son of Man which, of course, is Jesus. The Scripture tells us that judgment is based on more than a confession of faith. Judgment is based on what God expects of us, to act with loving care for the needy. This is not the gospel of popular belief. This is the Gospel of Matthew that quotes Jesus telling the disciples that judgment is based on faith and the response, which is providing loving care for the needy.

If we desire to be righteous ... if we identify with Christ ... if we want to be on the right side of judgment ... if we want salvation ... then we will act with loving care for the needy. What is taught in this particular scripture is more than an expression of faith; it is faith and living your

faith as it is put into action. Faith triggers an appropriate response. Again, I think this is Scripture that we should all live by. The criteria of judgment is works of mercy to those in great need.

Jesus talks about judgment day and uses a metaphor of sheep and goats to represent humanity. There are various interpretations of this. Jesus separates the good and the bad. Jesus separates the faithful and unfaithful. Jesus separates those who respond appropriately vs. those who fail to respond with compassion to those in need. The sheep on the right hear "you are blessed. inherit the kingdom." The goats on the left hear "you are cursed, leave me and go into the eternal fire prepared for the devil." It is either one or the other; there is no middle ground. Your faith requires an appropriate response. The lesson today is one of many biblical lessons on putting faith into action.

They are blessed because of their works of mercy to those in great need. I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothing. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me. The people are confused. Both groups, the active and the passive, are confused. They ask Jesus "when did this happen?" The response is "when you did it to the underprivileged, the poor, the needy." This is a reference to all human beings in need. It refers to all people throughout the world because those in need are members of the Lord's family. When you did it, or failed to do it, to a member of the Lord's family then you did it, or failed to do it, to the Lord.

It is a loving family connection. If you attack my son then you have to deal with me. If you insult my wife then you insult me. Our relationship with the Lord is a blood relationship! The homeless are members of the Lord's family. The poor, the hungry, those who are thirsty, strangers, the naked, and even prisoners are members of the Lord's family. All are members of

the Lords family. That means that the immigrants and the refugees are all members of Lords family.

I have seen these verses put into action right here in your ministry. I have seen you on **The Right of the King** in your ministry: Gateway, Meals on Wheels, Neighbors Helping Neighbors, prison ministry, the list goes on. As you know I recently went on a school trip to the border between the US and Mexico. There are several things that I want to talk about and will talk about and write about as time and space permit. I have witnessed faithful volunteers make a special effort to live out this gospel and care for God's children. Like you, their goal is to be on **The Right of the King**.

My most recent newsletter article is Derek's story. I was shocked because I saw what equates to slavery here in America today. His crime is coming to America - a felony. I will repeat that for emphasis because it goes against our concept of freedom. It goes against the very founding principles of this nation. It goes against what we are willing to fight for and continue to advocate for as veterans. The concept sends goose bumps down my spine. Coming to America is a felony. He came because when gangs took over his country they murdered ex-military. Because of his crime - coming to America - he is confined and forced to pay \$450 month. He is a slave to debt and the system that created the debt.

This is a blatant violation of the very essence of liberty. It goes against everything that the statue of Liberty represents. It goes against the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. It is a violation of humanity. It goes against the very essence of Christianity because it goes against the teachings of Jesus. With tears I wrote in my journal "I have entered into the Twilight Zone and have gone back to a time when slavery was legal and permitted here in the U.S. Today I have witnessed slavery with my very own eyes. It is my prayer that the American society will

be outraged if the truth were told. I feel honored to be a part of this program that has allowed me to see this with my very own eyes. There is a system of power at work that keeps him from being successful. Those words simply are not strong enough. The system holds him down and blames him for being there. I am a changed man. I don't know what I will do but I cannot stand for this.

I met him through an organization called *No More Deaths*. You can look them up on line just Google the words "No More Deaths." You will see the humanitarian good that they do and some of the abuses they endure. Their goal is to help rescue people from death by providing food, water, and medical aid. Hundreds die in the Arizona desert every year. Last year there were 417 deaths. That averages to more than one person every day. That is just the confirmed deaths as there are many more that go missing and are never found. Their goal is to follow the teachings of Jesus by providing works of mercy to those in great need.

They help people who have the most extreme need. Those of the greatest need are those that are dying. They are classified as illegal immigrants. In my social psychology class I learned about using such terminology. It is used to degrade people to make it easier to victimize them. Classifying a group of people as illegal allows our system to abuse them and deny their human rights. No one is illegal. I say again no one is illegal. Do we have illegal drivers? No. We have people that drive without a license. We do not have groups of people classified as illegal. Do we have illegal tax filers? No. Do we have illegal citizens? No. Illegal became the terminology to devalue the human being. Not only that - much more important - these are God's children. And God seriously loves them! And God takes our action towards them very seriously!

People come to America for the dream - the American dream - a chance for freedom in the land of the free. But in the face of the global refugee crisis they come for survival. The problem is if they are not free to seek freedom here then this is not the land of the free. Let us

seek what is right - the righteousness of God. Let us seek to do what is right. Let us be those who are seated on **The Right of the King.**