

# The King Has Something to Say

## Matthew 25:31-46

### Introduction

Let me ask you a question:

*What Scripture (verse or passage) has had the most powerful impact in your life?*

That it, what is the verse or the story that grabbed your heart when you heard it, and won't let go?

- It might be your favorite verse or story.
- It might be that verse that continues to haunt you.
- It is likely that verse that has changed your thinking and your life.

The Gospel lesson I have just read to you was just such a passage for two saints in the course of church history. One name you probably know; the other is lesser known.

Saint Francis of Assisi is the name you probably know. Francis was a wealthy and very high-spirited young man when he came upon this passage of Scripture. He had everything he wanted and needed. Except happiness. He knew that somehow his life was incomplete.

- One day, as he was out riding, he met a leper, a man who was very repulsive to look at because of how the disease had impacted his body.
- Something inside Francis moved him to dismount and to fling his arms about that leper.
- As he did so, Francis later reported, the leper's face transformed into the face of Jesus.

You may not know the name of St. Martin of Tours. He was a Roman soldier and a Christian. One cold winter day as he was entering a city, Martin was met by a beggar who asked him for alms.

- Martin had no money to give him, but the poor beggar was blue and shivering from the cold, so Martin took off his soldier's coat. It was worn and frayed, but it was all he had. He cut it in two and gave half to the beggar.
- That night Martin had a dream. In it he saw heaven and all of the angels surrounding Jesus. Jesus was wearing half of a worn and frayed soldier's coat.
- The angels asked Jesus, "Where did you get that old coat?"
- Jesus answered: "My friend Martin gave it to me."

Hear the words of the text again:

*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. (Matthew 25:35-36)*

All throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus had been preparing his followers for the coming of His kingdom. His kingdom, we have seen, is comparable to:

- A farmer sowing seed in his field
- A pearl of great price
- A tiny mustard seed that grows into a mighty tree

That's not what they had been expecting. In their worldview, kings wage war and conquer nations. They don't sow seeds. What kind of kingdom is this? Well, the King has come, and He has something to say about His kingdom:

### **CHARACTERISTIC #1: IT SHOWS UP IN THE SIMPLE THINGS**

Verse 40 begins:

*The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine..." (Matthew 25:40a)*

One of the preachers from my youth used to say the most beautiful word in the Bible was "whosoever." And then he would recite John 3:16:

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16, KJV)*

He would go on to talk about how there were no restrictions attached to the "whosoever" in this verse. It doesn't say:

- Only those who have cleaned up their lives
- Only those with good credit or a college education
- Only those with the proper skin tone or family heritage

Well, if "whosoever" is the most beautiful word, I think "whatever" ought to be a close second. Whatever you did for the least of these.

The kingdom is not complicated. It is made up of the simple deeds expressed by people of faith as they live their lives. Things like:

- A hug to a person craving human contact
- Half a coat to cold and shivering man
- A smile to a lonely and depressed woman
- A phone call to a struggling friend
- A point of connection to one who feels forgotten and abandoned

More times than not, God's people don't realize the enormous impact felt because of the things they have done. They will "But I didn't do that much" or "I didn't even realize I was doing that."

We are so oriented to "big" and "over the top" that we think "big" = impact. But not in the kingdom. In a parallel passage Jesus talks about the impact of a cup of cold water.

*And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.”  
(Matthew 10:42)*

Do you remember the story about the widow who took her entire savings to the Temple one day. Her entire savings: two copper coins. While all of the rich people were dropping in their bags of money, making sure everyone heard the clink, clink, clink of their coins, she quietly deposited her two coins in the offering plate. Do you remember what Jesus said about that gift?

*“Truly I tell you,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others.”  
(Luke 21:3)*

We sometimes can paralyze ourselves into inaction because we don't think that what we do is big enough for God. But whatever it is, the God who multiplies five loaves and two fish, who counts two coins as more than large bankrolls, who quenches thirsty hearts with a cup of cold water, takes your “whatever” and changes hearts and lives.

*The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, **whatever** you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine...” (Matthew 25:40a)*

But the King is not yet done speaking. He continues with the rest of the verse ...

## **CHARACTERISTIC #2: IT SEEKS NO OTHER REWARD**

The last few words of verse 40 finish the king's reply:

*The King will reply, “... you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40b)*

The faithful people of God do not visit the imprisoned, or feed the hungry, or clothe the naked because they think they are helping Christ and piling up eternal merits. They help because they cannot stop themselves from doing so.

*It was the natural, instinctive, quite uncalculating reaction of a loving heart.*

A heart that had been changed by God's love for them.

*Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:11)*

It is only natural to respond in that way. It is the same kind of radical behavior Jesus commends in the Sermon on the Mount. Here is how the Message presents it:

*If someone strikes you, stand there and take it. If someone drags you into court and sues for the shirt off your back, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it. And if someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to*

*practice the servant life. No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously... I'm telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer...*

Why should live that way?

*You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you. (Matthew 5)*

Now, contrast that to the hearts of the others in the story:

*Lord, if we had only known that hungry person was you ... that sick person was you ... that prisoner was you ... we most certainly would have responded differently!*

Of course they would have! The motivation was different. But help like that is not the way of the kingdom of God.

## **APPLICATION**

Listen carefully today! The King is speaking. He reminds you that His kingdom is unlike any other kingdom in the history of the world. It is not defined by borders, or treaties, or parliaments and armies, It is identifiable by the people who choose to follow Him and simply and instinctively touch the lives of those around them with the life giving truth of God's love for them.

But listen carefully! This is important! There are consequences to be reckoned with! The King also points out the future for those who call on Him:

*Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life. (Matthew 25:46)*

The righteous are those whose hearts have been transformed by their relationship with Jesus. The kingdom of Christ belongs to those people. They follow Him and live their lives according to His teachings.

But that is not the future for every person living today or who has lived in the past. Some opt to seek a different path, one that does not require a life yielded to the King. In so doing, they miss the point of Christ's kingdom.

And on that day when Christ returns for the final time:

*... and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (Matthew 25:31-32)*

And he will say to those righteous people (the sheep):

*Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. (Matthew 25:34)*

And to those who sought another way (the goats):

*Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (Matthew 25:41)*

On that day when the King has something to say, I know the words I want to hear. I pray we all hear them as well.

Amen.