

Matthew 25: 31-46 (New International Version)

³¹"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³²All 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. ³³He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For 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, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

³⁷"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

⁴⁰"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

⁴¹"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

⁴⁴"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

⁴⁵"He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

⁴⁶"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

OASIS: Doing for the Least, Mt. 25: 31-46

Possible Starter question: What kind of people are you most likely to help?
What kind do you avoid?

Transitional comment: Fasten your seat belt! Our passage today is a deeply challenging and demanding passage. It is a part of a much larger teaching section (known as the Mt. Olivet Discourse, Mt. 24-25), as Jesus talked privately to his disciples during his last days before the cross.

- Pray for the Holy Spirit's leading (if you haven't already prayed)
- Now let's listen as someone reads our passage aloud.
- Take a couple of minutes on your own to look for repeated words and ideas, as well as to find several major contrasts or opposites.)

First section (vs. 31-33 and 46):

O Jesus begins by looking forward to a future time and day. What are some of the key elements that he describes? What will happen?

(n.b. Sometimes it is helpful to have people spot the verbs.)

(n.b. Jesus is speaking of what is known in the Bible as the "Day of the Lord," the day when God will exercise justice. He draws upon Daniel 7 (vs. 13-14,) that describes the enthronement of the Messiah.)

O What image or metaphor does Jesus use?

I Why do you think he uses the image? What is the point or purpose?

O It is okay to peek ahead to the conclusion. What is the bottom line insight (v. 46)?

I Imagine you didn't know what Jesus said between the beginning and the bottom line. What definitions of "the righteous" might be tempting or expected?

Second section (vs. 34-40):

O In vs. 34, to whom is the King speaking. What are they being offered?

I What do you find attractive about the King's offer?

O Why or on what basis does the King bless these people?

O Who were the people being caring for? In what ways?

A Consider these 6 "kinds of people." Where in our society or world might some of the kinds of people live?

O In vs. 37, what is it that surprises "the righteous"?

I Why do you think that is?

Third section (vs. 41-45):

- O In what ways do the King's words indicate his disapproval?
- O On what basis is He upset?
(n.b. Throughout the OT, God repeatedly and strongly expressed His commitment to justice and His expectation that Israel care for vulnerable people. This is not a new concern! Deut. 24; Is. 58:64; Micah 3, etc.)
- O In vs. 44, what is it that surprises "those on the left"?
 - I Why do you think that happened? What did they fail to realize or do?
 - A In what ways can we be similarly blinded to this reality?
 - A What are the "rationalizations" by which we excuse our response or lack thereof?
 - A Given our circumstantial realities (busy lives, where we live, families we serve, multiple commitments, etc.), any sense of how the Holy Spirit is urging/leading you to apply this passage? Short-term ways? Longer term considerations?

Summary/conclusion:

Prayer together: Without God's love and grace, we can easily fall prey to "analysis-paralysis" or guilt. Let's pray for one another that :

- a. we develop a heart for all people, a heart like God's,
- b. our eyes are opened to the presence and needs of people near and far,
- c. each of us grows in love and action in helping others, for Jesus' sake.

Future application/sharing: During our next few meetings, let's put aside false modesty and share ways that God moves us to actively care for people, in compassion and justice.

Text is on other page or www.Biblegateway.com

- a. BIG idea: Doing good means...knowing God's heart for the most vulnerable people, making ourselves aware of them, and meeting their needs in His name.
- b. Key verse/idea: Mt. 25: 40: **"whatever you did for one of the least..."**
- c. KEY: O = Observation; I = Interpretation; A = Application (or C = Challenge).

Advice to study leaders:

- d. Complement your OIA questions with "process questions" (what else? what more? What do others of you see/think?).
- e. Determine the core questions you'll ask (know which ones to skip if pressed for time).
- f. Always reword questions in words are comfortable for you (and, if the question doesn't make sense to you, then discard it.)
- g. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. How long do you wait? Take your time; don't rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- h. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- i. Application: Pace the study to conclude with "difference making" application.
- j. Secondary texts—use other texts very sparingly, even if they are relevant. Otherwise, other texts will push you more into the "teacher role," rather than that of facilitator. It also can cause some people to feel distracted or de-powered.
- k. If you are utilizing this "on-line" study and not part of the OASIS course, I recommend that you get the 1-volume commentary entitled New Bible Commentary, Revised (21st Century Edition, IVP). It is well worth the \$40.