

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: “The Stranger” from the “Call Stories” sermon series

Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- This section of Matthew is known as both the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats and the Judgement of the Nations. This is the final parable in the Book of Mathew and a story about the final judgement.
- Verses 31-33 read, “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, 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. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.” Jesus used sheep and goats to illustrate the difference between believers and unbelievers. Ezekiel 34:17-24 makes a similar separation between sheep and goats.
- After illustrating those that are separated, this story then details how common kindness for one another will affect our standing in the final judgement before God. Verses 34-36 discuss how those on His right (sheep) provided for Him when He was in need. Specifically, “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.”
- Verses 37-39 have those on the right respond to Jesus confused as to when they provided for Him. Jesus responds in verse 40, “...‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” In a similar style, Jesus tells those on His left (goats) that they did not help Jesus in His times of need. When they asked when that might have happened, Jesus replies in a similar way as He did to those on His right, “whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.”
- Verse 46 concludes with, ““Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- We are continuing the series of different call stories, reminding ourselves that God calls each one of us to be in service to God's kingdom here on earth. Today is the conclusion of this series, and we are examining Jesus' final discourse in the Book of Matthew.
- This is a passage that causes us to pause and reflect on our lives and personal intentions. It is a passage that invites us to understand how Christ is calling us to action in the world. To be a people that live out our faith with each step we take!
- Verse 35 tells us that Jesus separates the sheep from the goats and tells one group what they have done to "inherit the kingdom."
- Fight or flight response: before we fight or flee in a challenging situation, most of us are first paralyzed from acting. We are still and do nothing, and this is the opposite of what Jesus is teaching us here. The parable that precedes this passage (Parable of the Talents) is also a call to action!
- We must instill a desire within ourselves to call upon the Holy Spirit, in a way that will move us to act so that it becomes in our nature to act as the hands and feet of Jesus Christ in all that we do.
- The sheep and the goats were not separated by our action or inaction, but more in their nature. As Jesus shares all the things that the sheep have done to inherit the kingdom, He also shares that the sheep have a response to their actions..." Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food...?" Jesus replied, "whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me, you did it to me". Neither group knew whom they were serving, it is marked by who had the natural response to see a need and respond with love.
- As John Wesley taught regarding sanctification, we must live our lives through the lens of loving God and loving our neighbor.
- What Jesus is saying in this passage is that what you do matters! What we do matters! Your story matters! We only need to respond in love and get going!
- Your story matters, your love matters. We are here for each other and not in this alone on this journey! Our Savior offers us grace that will change our lives and how we see the world and show the true kingdom here on earth!

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- Compare and contrast the sheep from the goats. What is the main point of this parable?
- What specific acts of mercy can we do every day to fulfill what love requires of us?
- Who do you think Jesus is referring to when He says in v. 32 “All the nations will be gathered before him...”
- Reflect on your role in God’s kingdom. What does this look like? How can you lean more into this role? In other words, how can you “get going”!

