



Honoring the Vulnerable

Date: November 17, 2024

Text: Matthew 25:31 - 46

BIG IDEA

Who are the vulnerable among you? As we approach Thanksgiving and the Christmas season it seems much easier to consider those in need. Many of us will serve in food pantries, donate food, pack Christmas boxes, and reach out to those that might be hurting. But what about the other seasons? How can we more consistently honor those who need help in our church, school, workplace, and community?

Jesus intentionally positioned Himself to see people all throughout Scripture. And it was in truly seeing them, getting to know them, and offering them love that He honored them; we want to learn to do the same.

(Read the following slowly for a time of contemplation and slowing down.)

So just for a moment, let's slow our minds. All of our to-dos and unanswered messages can wait. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath. Sit for just a moment. Who comes to mind?

Conversation Starter

- Last week, we considered giftings we might have and then explored opportunities that Asbury has in those areas. What did you find?
- Who are the vulnerable among you? When have you helped someone in need?

COMMENTARY #1

(Verses 31-40) This parable is titled “The Sheep and the Goats.” Jesus explains that when the Son of Man comes, all the nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate the people from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

According to the study notes in the NIV Zondervan Study Bible, this would have been familiar to the audience because, although the sheep and the goats looked similar and often grazed together, they had to be separated at night because the goats required more warmth to rest. When He says that He will separate the people from one another, he is identifying that this is a personal and individual judgment and not a group assessment. The more honorable (the sheep) are placed on the right, and the more disgraceful (the goats) are placed on the left.

Jesus then goes on to identify various vulnerable groups—hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and incarcerated. Jesus welcomes the people on the right (the sheep) to take their inheritance because they gave the thirsty a drink, the hungry food, the naked clothes, the sick care, and the incarcerated a visit. He tells them that when they did these things for the least of these, they did them for Him.

Discussion Questions

1. The “sheep” were initially confused because they could not think of when they saw Jesus and gave Him drink, food, clothing, care, or visitation. Why did Jesus tell them that they did these things for Him?
 2. Throughout Jesus' time on earth, He paid attention to people on the margins. How can we better notice and help the needy?
 3. What are some practical ways that we can provide necessities for the vulnerable around us?
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COMMENTARY #2

(Verses 41-46) Now the “goats” (the people on the left), were called out for not helping Jesus and were told to depart into the eternal fire. The “goats” questioned when they saw Jesus and did not help him. This must have been very confusing to them. Jesus told them that when they did not help the thirsty, the hungry, the naked, the sick, and the incarcerated, they did not help him.

These verses demonstrate that the “goats” did not fully understand or receive the Christian message. They were not showing mercy or providing for the vulnerable around them. In some ways, this sounds like a *works* kind of faith. We are saved by grace through faith, not works. We cannot earn our way into heaven. However, don't miss this point—when the Christian message is received/believed, the hearer/believer cannot help but care for the needy.

This parable (verses 31-46) is the last told by Matthew before he moved on to describe Jesus' Passion, Death, and Resurrection.

Discussion Questions

1. The “goats” were initially confused because they could not think of when they saw Jesus and did not give Him drink,



food, clothing, care, or visitation. Why did Jesus tell them that they did not do these things for Him?

2. What is the Christian message?
3. What does it mean to receive/believe the Christian message and how does life change once one receives/believes?

GOING DEEPER

Let's do a deep dive into the mission partners of Asbury. Click on this link to explore our partners: [Asbury Church Local Missions \(weareasbury.com/localmissions\)](http://weareasbury.com/localmissions)

Take note of the different areas of the partners. Make a list on the board or on paper of the different categories and opportunities found here.

- Were you aware of all of these opportunities?
- Are you aware of additional partners with whom our church is involved?
- Do any of these pique your interest?
- Why might it be a good idea to select missions that our church also supports?
- Describe any mission partners that your group is involved in serving.



Upcoming: In February, Asbury will be holding the Missions Gathering! Be on the lookout for more information about how you can learn about both global and local mission partners!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Right Now Media - [How to Read Matthew Part 2 \(The Bible Project\)](#)

Right Now Media - [Seeing Jesus in all of Scripture: Matthew 24 & 25 \(Spoken Gospel\)](#)

GROUP ACTIVITY

Recite Asbury's Mission Statement: *We are a growing family awakening to God and living on mission.*

Let's take this statement apart:

*We are a **growing family**.* . . .

- Think of ways our church is **growing**. Our recent sermon series entitled "That's Good News" highlighted the good news of the gospel and gave us practical ways to share our faith so that we grow.

WORSHIP SERIES

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- Think of ways our church is a **family**. What makes a strong family? In what ways does our church act like a family?

. . .**awakening to God**

- Full life is found when we invite Jesus to be Lord of our lives. He promises abundant life far greater than we can imagine.
- No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, there are always more ways to **awaken to God**. What are some of these ways?

. . .**and living on mission.**

- We are called to bring God's kingdom to earth and be a part of His plan to save the world.
- This includes the vulnerable that we have been talking about today. What are some practical ways that we can live on **mission** to specifically help the vulnerable among us?