



Silverdale Baptist

THE INVITATION • COME AND BE BLESSED • MATTHEW 25:31-46 • 9/5-6/2020

Key Truth

There will be a day of judgment when Christ will separate His followers from those who refused to follow Him. To His followers, Jesus says... Come and be Blessed.

Getting Started

Ask the group to:

Describe a time when you have served someone else just because they needed help.

Maybe you:

- volunteered to feed the homeless.
- helped someone who was broken down on the side of the road.
- financially support a missionary.
- mowed the lawn for a neighbor who needed help.

Please describe how you felt helping someone who desperately needed it.

As Christians, we know that we need to serve the poor, but we get distracted by the circumstances of life. In the passage we're discussing today, Jesus talks about the characteristics of His followers. You can recognize them by the way they serve others.

Learn

Leader: As we said last week, even though the passage is probably very familiar to your small group, the directions will ask you to have someone read the passage three different times. This is by design. Sometimes we are too familiar with a passage of Scripture. Some texts we

have read and heard so many times we are a little numb to the words. Hearing it more than once might help us catch something in the text we had forgotten or perhaps never noticed.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 25:31-46.

Discussion questions:

How would you explain the story of the sheep and goats in your own words?

How are the sheep and the goats similar? How are they different?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 25:31-46.

How does Jesus separate the people?

What are the characteristics of the sheep?

Why were the sheep surprised?

What is the invitation to the sheep?

How does verse 34 describe the place the sheep will spend eternity?

Just so we don't miss it, who was the kingdom mentioned in verse 34 prepared for?

Palestinian shepherds frequently had to separate their flocks similar to the way Jesus describes. Sheep and goats freely intermingled during the day. But it was common to separate them at night.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 25:31-46.

What are the characteristics of the goats?

Why are the goats surprised?

According to verse 41, where will the goats go?

Who was that place prepared for?

In verse 46, what happens to the sheep? The goats?

Apply

Leader: Help your small group identify how the truths from this Scripture passage apply to their own lives.

How are you impacted knowing that by serving the hungry, homeless, and lonely, you are serving Jesus?

How would the world be different if every Christian became involved in ministering to people in need?

What opportunities does Silverdale provide for ministering to people in need? How can you participate?

How does the fact that you will be judged change the way you view your life?

How does it change the way you look at others?

What are actions we as a group can take to help those in need?

Leader: SBCServeTheCity.com has more information about how your small group can serve others.

Pray

Close in prayer, asking God to give you a heart for the poor and needy. Praise God for His wisdom and ask that He would show the people of your small group ways to help people in our community. Thank God for His saving grace and the glimpses of His majesty that He gives us in our world.

Dig Deeper

| MATTHEW 25:31-46

25:31. "When the Son of Man comes in His glory" points to the future and the closing era of God's plan of redemption. Jesus' return at some point in the future is often treated with slight embarrassment today by otherwise fine Christians. Their expectations have not been met even though the signs seem to line up again and again. The words "glory," "angels," and "throne" call attention to the majesty, power and authority of the second coming.

25:32. The word for "nations" can refer either to Gentiles only or to all people from every nation including Israel. The latter is to be preferred here. The emphasis is on all people as individuals, not on nations collectively. Each person will be judged based on his or her response to the Gospel and will receive Christ's verdict. Jesus "will separate them one from another." This image of judgment gives rise to several important points. First, all of human life and effort boils down to a basic choice based on Jesus' message and sacrifice. A second important point we can take

from the image in this parable concerns the sheep and the goats. Distinguishing between these two animals is difficult, especially from a distance, except for someone who knows precisely what to look for. A shepherd is qualified.

25:33. The positions of "left" and "right" indicate the complete distinction. There is no middle ground. The sheep have the position on the right, the place of honor. The goats are on the left, in this case the place of rejection.

25:34. "The King" emphasizes Jesus' dominion and power at the final judgment. His reign, which is no less real today, will be complete—all of creation will be forced to acknowledge His authority. "Those on His right" are invited to "come." They will receive their reward for faithful service. Notice they are not about to be blessed but already are blessed by my Father. The word "blessed" emphasizes God's action in bringing people into His desired relationship with them. The fact of our relationship to God leads naturally to the next image in the parable. "Inherit the kingdom" underscores the Christian's place in God's family. The Scripture often uses the imagery of an "inheritance" to describe our inclusion in God's family and the reward we will enjoy.

25:35. The criteria for judgment is surprising, and a few preliminary words may help to understand the specific intent of the parable. Judgment is based on works in this parable, but this does not mean Jesus was describing salvation by works. He was emphasizing the importance of service, and service especially to the neediest people in our society. His strong language here does not negate the wider New Testament teaching of salvation by grace through faith. It simply highlights the results of salvation.

25:36. "Naked" may refer to someone without any clothes or someone who only has an undergarment. Ministry to the sick is always important. Only when you have benefited firsthand from this kind of kindness can you really appreciate its impact. In this context the people in prison may refer to those who fell on hard times through debt or were abused in some manner by the wealthy and influential. They were the weak and poor.

25:37-39. One of the most interesting features of this parable is the element of surprise on both sides. Our service to others must not be undertaken with the intention of piling up rewards. That kind of motivation undermines the genuineness of service.

25:40. Who are the "least of these my brothers"? Some interpreters suggest brothers refers to the disciples only, but such an understanding is far too narrow and in effect limits the application of the parable to the first century. A better understanding is the more obvious interpretation, that they are any person in need.

25:41. This passage essentially mirrors the previous section with a few more interesting details. "The eternal fire" is a detail of hell about which we can either make too much or too little. Some preachers over the years appear almost to take delight in describing their visions of hell.

25:42-43. The criteria for the rejection of the wicked is the opposite of the criteria for the inclusion of the righteous. Their sins are primarily those of omission.

25:44. You can almost hear in these words of defense, "but we never hurt anyone!" That is true, but the failure to show compassion reveals the state of one's soul. A related plea of "if we had known it was you!" is equally unconvincing.

25:45. "You did not do" underscores the inaction of the cursed. Interestingly, their lack of service, as benign as that may sound to us, puts them in the same category as those who commit gross sins, reel drunkenly down the streets, or scream profanely. This verse highlights the danger of the "isolated moral person" who did nothing to harm anyone.

25:46. The opposite destinations underscore the finality of the verdict that is rendered at the judgment. Both are "eternal."

Commentary provided by SmallGroup.com, a ministry of Life Way. Unknown author.