



All Age Harvest Sermon: Bishops' Appeal

Matthew 25:31-45 Jubilee Bible 2000 (JUB)

³¹ When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then he shall sit upon the throne of his glory, ³² and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats, ³³ and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

³⁴ Then shall the King say unto those on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵ for I was hungry, and ye gave me food; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; ³⁶ naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

³⁷ Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee? or thirsty and give thee drink? ³⁸ When did we see thee a stranger and take thee in? or naked and clothe thee? ³⁹ Or when did we see thee sick or in prison and come unto thee?

⁴⁰ And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brothers, ye have done it unto me.

⁴¹ Then he shall also say unto those who shall be on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry, and ye gave me no food; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not.

⁴⁴ Then they shall also answer him, saying, Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister unto thee? ⁴⁵ Then he shall answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of my brothers, ye did it not to me.

All Age Service: Talk Notes

Jesus often told stories to get his message across about the 'Kingdom of Heaven' that was ready for anyone who believed in Him. They were stories with a hidden meaning a bit like a riddle.

Here are some riddles:-

What runs but never walks, often murmurs but never talks, has a bed but never sleeps, has a mouth but never eats?

(A river)

All about but cannot be seen, can be captured but cannot be held, no throat but can be heard?

(The wind)

The stories Jesus told were more than riddles as the content had eternal consequences. These were called parables. The true meaning can be applied to all our lives.

The crowds that heard these parables had to work the meaning out for themselves.

Those hearing this parable would have been familiar with the process of sorting the flocks. During the day, sheep and goats would mingle, grazing together and roaming where they pleased. But at night, their needs were different, and they would be separated.

Sheep and goats might look similar and make noises that are almost the same, but their personalities and behaviours are very, very different.ⁱ



This little goat looks cute and innocent doesn't he? (hold up prop or show picture.) But anyone who has ever spent time with goats knows that they can be trouble. Goats are very independent animals.

If the shepherd decided to go away for a week and left the goats to survive on their own, they could probably do it.

Goats also have huge appetites and will eat anything and everything to satisfy their hunger. A shepherd has to be careful, because a mama goat will often eat every bit of the food put out for her babies, leaving them to go hungry. She just uses her head to bump them out of the way so she can have their dinner!

Another thing about goats is that they're motivated by their own desires. For example, let's say a goat likes the way his shepherd's hair tastes. He is always sneaking up behind the shepherd and trying to take a bite. The shepherd doesn't like this of course, and punishes the goat when he does it. But the goat can't stop thinking about how good that hair tastes! So as soon as the shepherd lies down to take a nap, that goat is right there, chewing on the sleeping shepherd's hair and hopefully avoiding any punishment. Goats love doing what they want more than they love pleasing the shepherd.

Why sheep and goats? God often describes his people as sheep in scripture. Sheep listen to their shepherd, and follow him. They look to him for all their needs and will suffer without him. What are goats like? Goats are stubborn. They resist being told what to do. They'll eat (take in) almost anything, even garbage. People who please God do what he says and look to him for guidance. People who resist God and want to do their own thing are stubborn, and end up accepting the lies and garbage of this world. The goats in the lesson thought they were doing God's work, but they were obviously not listening to how he wanted it done, or they were doing it for their own goals, not his. He didn't even know them.

(You could separate the congregation into 2 groups. Demonstrate how sheep hear the shepherd's voice by encouraging 1 group to stop talking and to listen as soon as you start telling them something important; and show how goats can miss out on what God is saying because they can be too busy doing their own thing by encouraging the 2nd group not to stop and listen when you tell them something important. They might even half hear what you say and get it wrong!)

So what does God want? What is God saying to us? The Bible is very clear and we learn here that we show our love for God by loving others. 'Others' are not just people like us, but also people who are different to us. They are not just people who are our close family and friends but people outside of our circle. In this passage Jesus talks about people who are hungry and need food, who are thirsty and need a drink, who need clothes, who are sick and need carers and who are in prison and need visitors.

This Harvest, we think about all that we are thankful for – all the good things in our lives. But we also think about others and how best we can show our love and our thanks to God, by showing love and service to others.



There is the story about an old lady who was very poor. She had nothing. No shelter, no food, no proper clothes. She prayed to God and God gave her 10 apples. This was wonderful. 'Now I can get the things I need,' she said. She was so hungry of course that she ate the first three apples and so was full. The next three apples she traded to rent some modest shelter so that she could be safe from the rain and the sun. She exchanged the next three apples for some new clothes, so she was no longer cold at night and would look smart during the day. But there was then one apple left over. 'Why did you give me one apple more than I needed?' she asked God. 'So you can have something with which to say thank-you to me,' replied God. God gives us enough to say thank-you.



Use a globe or a map as a display at the front and throw a soft ball if you don't have an inflatable globe to throw. Use it to illustrate the following three worlds:

a. A World of Amazing Harvests

Toss the globe to adults and children, who can name different sorts of foods and vegetables that come from around the world. Some of these fruits and vegetables may be on display already

b. A World of Terrible Hurts and Hunger

Toss the globe to adults and children who can name some of the bad 'harvests' of the world in terms of war, famine and distress

c. A World of Hope

Toss the globe to adults and children who can name some of the good things that are happening around God's world, as the harvest of his good work through people's lives is made real.ⁱⁱ

Emphasize that many of these good works are coming to pass when people choose to be like sheep who listen to the shepherds voice and follow him to where they can offer hope and solidarity to others.

Humanitarian Appeals

Due to the generosity of people in the Church of Ireland we have been able to fund many life saving endeavours. Some of the funding below is as a result of specific appeals. Others were allocated through general giving.

- East Africa Appeal: To date, €35,000 and £42,000 has been released from Bishops' Appeal to Tearfund Ireland and Christian Aid for their humanitarian responses throughout Northern Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia. The drought and famine continue to create a crisis on a large scale. Funds are being used for emergency food, water and medical supplies.
- €22,000 was allocated to Tearfund Ireland for lifesaving medicine in Yemen. Two shipments of urgently needed medicines to assist in the cholera response have been received. This includes 72,000 sachets of oral rehydration salt and 17 tons of essential medicines (including IV fluids and antibiotics) and medical supplies
- £25,500 was released to CMS Ireland for their emergency relief efforts in dioceses in South Sudan receiving thousands of people fleeing violence and food shortages.
- £24,000 was released to CMS Ireland for their work in 5 refugee camps in Uganda. These camps are receiving people from South Sudan and the work focuses on vulnerable children and support for child headed households.

As we work in partnership we realise that this is an opportunity to serve and to live as Jesus has called us to, as sheep not goats. Instead of only thinking of ourselves and looking after ourselves and feeding and clothing ourselves, He is asking us to listen to His voice, to how much He loves these communities who are suffering, how much they mean to Him, and to be His hands and his feet to support them in these life-giving endeavours.

Let us pray.

ⁱ Section on differences between Sheep and Goats taken from here: <https://bible.org/seriespage/11-sheep-and-goats-matthew-2531-46>

ⁱⁱ Story of Old Lady and Globe prayers are taken from here: <http://www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk/god-is-a-faithful-gardener/>