

“And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.”

Now, just for a moment, imagine Jesus standing here in the middle of the sanctuary looking out over this congregation and makes that announcement. One question may come to our minds: “Is it the right side as he is looking at us or as we are looking at him?”

Maybe a better question we should be asking ourselves, “Am I a sheep or am I a goat?” But Jesus is saying this is how its going to be at the **LAST JUDGEMENT**, and waiting to that very moment to figure out if I am a sheep or a goat is a bit late to ask that question.

Over the past few Sundays we heard Jesus tell the people to do as they are told by the Pharisees, their temple leaders, but not to **ACT** as they do, for they are hypocrites, **NOT** practicing what they preach.

We heard of the ten virgins, good and faithful individuals, waiting for the arrival of the bridegroom, and when the foolish ones, who weren't fully **PREPARED** for his coming, had been locked out of the wedding feast, and they cried “Lord, Lord” for they knew who **HE** was, but the reply from within was “I do not know you.”

And then last week with the talents being measured out to each servant, each one a good and **TRUSTED** individual, but one hid away his gift, his talent, and did not nurture it and make it grow for the benefit, or **GLORY**, of his master, and was thus thrown into the darkness, “where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.”

And so we come to today's reading – The Last Judgement – when God will first gather all mankind together and then separate us, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, one to inherit the kingdom of God and life eternal, the other cast off to eternal punishment. But who are they, the sheep and the goats?

The sheep are those who listen for the voice of **THEIR** shepherd, they **KNOW** his voice and follow him. The goats, also being shepherded by the same shepherd, tend to ignore the call of the shepherd from time to time and go about business in their own fashion. The sheep graze together, unless butted away by the goats. In other words, those who not only **LISTEN** to the words of Jesus, of God, but put them into practice, and not lording over others, but going out of their way to be servant to others, and taking the gifts, the talents we **KNOW** we have, and grow them and exercise them for the glory of God, **NOT** for our own benefit, **THESE** are the sheep who by their free will follow the will of God.

In my own mind I don't think **ANY** of us needs to wait for judgement day to figure out to which side of the isle we will be escorted by the angels. But isn't it good to know we have ample opportunities to serve those in need, and maybe end up on the right side of the isle.

You don't know where the hungry are? Come serve food and wait tables downstairs on Tuesday evenings for the St Vincent de Paul meals or volunteer at the Food Shelf or Meals-on-Wheels to bring meals to shut-ins around town.

Can't find the naked to clothe? Volunteer at the Clothesline or the Salvation Army Store, or give **YOUR** knit hat or the pair of gloves you're wearing to someone who has none.

Would you like to raise someone's spirit who is ill or homebound? Come to me at the office and I'll share my short list with you. We have folks in the hospital, in nearly **ALL** the elderly and care facilities around town, as well as those stuck in their homes for any number of reasons. I can always get my hands on a **LONGER** list. But be aware – they may enjoy your visiting with them so much that they'll treat you like family.

Unfortunately for myself I haven't done prison ministry for many, many years, but here too are men and women who want to connect with those they see as life-preservers from God, to fan the dying embers of worthiness within them, struggling with their perception of worthiness lost due to the lives they lived.

And when someone asks for a drink, rather than just pointing out where the water fountain might be, offer them a couple of bottles of water to take along with them, and ask them what else you can do for them.

Yes, God is a developer of opportunities, watching to see how well we are paying attention to Him. We don't need to **WAIT** to be tapped out, we just need to do what little is asked of us every day, and after doing it to thank God for the opportunity. And if your only talent is being able to **BE THERE** for another, do it to the best of your ability, and grow and nurture that talent for the glory of God.