

**February 15, 2015**  
**Serving the Least**  
**Matthew 25:31-46**

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne.

32 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.

33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

35 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,

36 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.'

37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?

38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?

39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,

43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

44 "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

45 "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Good Morning my brothers and sister in Christ, I greet you in the name of Him who now sits on the right hand of the Father, but has promised to return for His own. I greet you in the name of Jesus, for there is no other name by which we might be saved. I greet you in the name of the only One who has the authority to judge and determine who will see the Father. If you believe in Jesus you ought to say AMEN. If you believe that He is going to return you ought to say AMEN. If you believe... you ought to want to make some noise.

Last Sunday I asked:

**WHAT ARE YOU WILLING TO DO TO LOVE YOUR GOD  
AND SERVE YOUR KING?**

The aim of that sermon was to bring you to an understanding that in order to love those you may find "unlovable" you first had to love God. I also suggested that one of the reasons we have such a hard time loving our neighbor as ourselves is because we had not yet learned how to truly love God. I closed that sermon with a reference to the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats as recorded in Matthew 25. Again, attempting to focus us on the need to treat everyone as God the Father has treated us. And to reinforce that all we do or don't do for each other we do also unto God.

So it is amazing to me that there is where I need to begin today. I have been studying and researching and praying about today's sermon. I have read a few sermons and some articles and asked God for a new way to present an old concept. So I ask you to pray with me and for me as I work with this theme:

**LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN IS NOT A PHOTO OP! <sup>1</sup>**

SHALL WE PRAY?

God of heaven and earth we come asking that you will open our **ears to hear** you. Open our **hearts to receive** you. Open our **minds to understand** you. Open our **eyes** so we might **see those who are in need**. Open our **hands so we may do your will**. In the name of Jesus the Christ we pray. Amen and Amen.

**LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN IS NOT A PHOTO OP!**

Photo Op is an informal way of referring to a photo opportunity. We often think of photo opportunities or photo ops as being something arranged by a politician for the

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<sup>1</sup> American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. Copyright © 2011 by Houghton

purpose of showing others all the good they are doing. American Heritage Dictionary defines it this way:

*an occasion that lends itself to (or is deliberately arranged for) taking photographs that provide favorable publicity for those who are photographed*

### **LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN IS NOT A PHOTO OP!**

When I worked for IMSA (Illinois Math and Science Academy) one of my responsibilities was to invite motivational speakers. It was something I enjoyed doing and was very good at doing as I had many contacts through out the state. After inviting and confirming a candidate for mayor of Chicago, I got a call from the campaign office and the spokesperson inquired about taking pictures of the students with the candidate. I reminded them that taking pictures of students was against school policy and had been clearly stated in the materials that had been sent weeks prior to the invitation. Less than an hour before the reception was to occur I got another phone call, this one was to inform me that the candidate could not make it! I had to walk into a room and tell about 200 students and parents that the candidate did not want to come and motivate them – the candidate did not care about them – it was just a photo op.

### **LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN IS NOT A PHOTO OP!**

At the last class of my preaching seminar the instructor invited his mentor the Rev. Jesse Louis Jackson to provide the closing lecture. I was looking forward to hearing what Rev. Jackson had to say about the art of preaching and also greeting an old friend. I had meet Rev. Jackson as a young teen and PUSH headquarters was across from my church and we had interacted many times of the last 30 years. Some of the members of the class had their phones and asked to take pictures after the lecture and as always Jesse agreed. But what amazed me was that the instructor, who called him his mentor, was so excited that Rev. Jackson was there he forgot to end our last class in prayer; he forget to return our final papers; he didn't even say good bye and wish us well. Instead he rushed to do a photo op with Jesse and his entourage on the steps of the seminary.

### **LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN IS NOT A PHOTO OP!**

While I was in Ghana I saw a man on the side of the road with the most amazing locks I had ever seen. They almost touched the ground and were

gathered and braided in this intricate pattern. I lifted my camera to take a picture and our guide said you ought to ask him if you may take his picture. His life is not a photo op for you.

### **LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN IS NOT A PHOTO OP!**

That is part of what Jesus was trying to tell His followers as He sat on the side of a mountain in His final discourse before Calvary. You don't do good for what you can get out of it. You do good because good flows out of you. Jesus illustrated the lesson with the parable of the sheep and the goats.

Jesus compared those around Him to sheep and goats. Now you might want to believe that Jesus was preaching to the sheep **and warning** them about the goats. But it is my understanding that both the sheep and the goats were right there in that first audience, as they will be at the end of time.

*<sup>32</sup> 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.*

**See, sheep and goats can hang out together during the day.** The sheep eat that which is close the ground and the goats eat that which is high up. The sheep tend to hang out together and be low keyed, while the goats are curious and independent. Sheep will gather together for warmth and protection of each other, while goats will go looking for shelter alone and get separated from each other. There are even some types of goats that look like sheep and can be trained to respond like sheep. But there are also differences.

Sheep will not drink from moving waters they prefer quiet streams for drinking.

*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
he leadeth me beside the still waters. (Psalms 23:2 KJV)*

Sheep are obedient to the shepherd

*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them,  
and they follow me. (John 10:27)*

Sheep can see behind them without turning their heads and can see up to 2 miles in the distance. But goats are near sighted; they can only see what is immediately in front of them.

The distinction being made here is that in all of the nations brought before Jesus at the end of times there will be both sheep and goats. Not because God made them to be sheep and goats but because when presented with the information they chose to be sheep and goats. Then that begs the question of what do we wish to be. The answer should be quite simple. We should want to be sheep. For the sheep:

... are **blessed by my Father; receive their inheritance**, and enter the **kingdom prepared** for them since **the creation of the world**.

Yet there remains a problem, we live in a world that contains goats. And goats do some of the same things sheep do, but not for the same reasons. Sheep are not looking for a photo op they are doing good because it flows from them because of their love for God. Proof that they did not take care of the sick, the hungry, the naked, the imprisoned, and the thirsty is that when rewarded for the action they asked God when did they do these things. They were not keeping record (photo op) of what they were doing, but again it was the love they had for God that flowed through them and allowed them to do what needed to be done.

Goats were rewarded with for their lack of care and love to eternal damnation. Like the sheep they asked why and Jesus told them you did not take care of the least of these. The goats will consult their photo albums, they will see pictures with children, and dignitaries, and maybe even a stranger, but they will not see Jesus and they will ask Jesus where were you. We did not see you! Then the short sightness of the goats will be revealed.

You did not take care of **everyone** and those you did care for you did it hoping for a photo op.

Some of us are guilty of treating this Christian journey as a photo op. We only want to do the big things, the things that will get us noticed, the things that will allow others to say, "Look at what she/he did". We forget there is no "I" in team. We forget the "I" in family is in the middle of the word not the beginning. We forget what the old saints use to say – there is no "Big I's and little you's" in God's kingdom.

### **LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN IS NOT A PHOTO OP!**

**Life as a Christian is about being a good person because of the love that flows within you as the result of your love for Jesus the Christ.**