

**St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas GA**

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Matthew 25:31-40

***"King and Lord"***

Today we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King – acknowledging the absolute Lordship of Jesus – as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The Holy Gospel gives us a vision of Jesus' coming again in glory with the angels – but we also are given an image of Jesus as the judge, who is also the Good Shepherd. This should be helpful for us as we will begin the season of Advent next Sunday.

Today's parable Jesus gives us the vision of the people as they are divided up at judgment day with a shepherd separating the sheep from the goats. The sheep were on the right and the goats on the left. He speaks to those on His right and says, *"Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 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, 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."* The sheep, who were the people who were in good relationship with God, were puzzled by this. They said to Him, *"When did we see you hungry and feed you? When did we visit you in prison, when did we..."* And the Lord answered, *"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'"* But then there are those on the left – the goats, Jesus said to them, *"For I was hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me nothing to drink, 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."* Their response was *"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?"* Jesus answered, *"Whatever you did not do for the least of these, you did not do for me."*

Many of you might be familiar with a Christian artist who passed away in the 80's due to a plane crash with his children. His name is Keith Green. He wrote and performed the very famous hymn "There is a Redeemer" and others. Those of you who have computers – I suggest you Google "Keith Green and the Sheep and the Goats." He does an outstanding six and half minute song about this Scripture; about the Sheep and the Goats. He cleverly illustrates the desire of the 'goats' to do anything trying to set themselves right.

When Jesus says, *"The least of these"* Who do you think would be *"the least"*? It could be anyone who is DIFFERENT FROM ME. One definition of *"the least of these"* that I find interesting is "anyone who is IGNORED or OVERLOOKED." This could be anyone, or maybe "that person doesn't amount to very much, not worth helping, of no value, a write that person off type." The "least of them" might not be a believer and could be someone who doesn't know the Lord yet. It's like the lawyer who asked Jesus "who is my neighbor?" Jesus answered him with the precious parable that we call "the Good Samaritan."

We may have a picture in our mind of who is the *"least"* but it may not be entirely accurate. I

Last Sunday after Pentecost, Christ the King - November 26, 2017, Year A

think sometimes we ALL may fall into this category ourselves. Can you think of a time when you have been hurting or were in need and someone reached out to you or even worse - they didn't reach out to you? Maybe there was a time when you needed someone to talk to and someone was there for you, when you were worried about something and someone prayed for you, laid hands on you and asked for God's forgiveness for you or helped you in some wonderful way. When you moved to a new town and needed some friendship – because you did not know anyone.

I remember my very first semester at Trinity School for Ministry, right outside Pittsburgh in Ambridge, PA. We had sold our home in Jacksonville and moved to Ambridge, an old steel town named for the American Bridge Company. I was blessed to be in a class of Church History – taught by my dear friend The Rev. Dr. Les Fairfield. In the latter part of the semester after studying the Roman Empire – we got to learn about the Church of England, and some of the people who stood out in the history of the church. I was astonished to hear about this man named William Wilberforce. Having grown up as a Roman Catholic – I had never heard of Wilberforce! I was totally amazed by his life and the physical impairments that he dealt with. I could relate to his arthritic pain, and was blessed to learn of his fortitude in dealing with it. He never let it stand in the way of his drive to accomplish what he felt the Lord was showing him to do – and what he knew was right. He fought year after year, session after session of Parliament to overcome the odds that were stacked against him to defeat the slave trade. It was just too profitable – and many who were members of Parliament benefitted from it themselves. Finally, on his death bed he learned that success might be coming. His dear friend William Penn, the Prime Minister, came to him and told him about what was about to happen. He died a month before the successful vote put an end to the slave trade in Britain. He became a hero to me and I wrote several papers about him and could not get enough to read and learn about him.

Ironically, after that first semester, I was blessed to go on a trip to England with the seminary, led by Dr. Fairfield, who personally knew of my passion for William Wilberforce. On Sunday morning, shortly after we landed at Gatwick, we were driven to Westminster Abbey for the Holy Eucharist service – which was celebrated by famed theologian N.T. Wright. On our way into Westminster Abbey, we were walking on many famous graves and past many famous monuments – but there was one special one that Dr. Fairfield was careful to point out to me. He stopped me abruptly – and told me to look down at my feet – I was standing on the marker for William Wilberforce's grave, and then he told me to look to my right – and I saw the magnificent statue of my hero. Both brought tears to our eyes, and I was not alone in my admiration for Wilberforce – others shared that passion – most especially Dr. Fairfield. There is a movie that I want to suggest you try to look at – called “Amazing Grace.” It is about William Wilberforce and about a man named John Newton too. Newton wrote the song “Amazing Grace” and there is a line in that song that says, “I once was blind but now I see.” If you know anything about this former slave trader captain, John Newton, he died a blind man.

Have you ever been in need and didn't know where to turn? Someone may have come to your

Last Sunday after Pentecost, Christ the King - November 26, 2017, Year A

aid physically, or emotionally, or maybe you were blessed spiritually. The importance of service when and where service is needed is not overlooked by our Lord. Jesus says in Matthew 10:42, *“If anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”* Such love for others glorifies God by reflecting our love for Him.

The author of Hebrews 6:10 says, *“God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.”* So, how can we help them? I jotted down some thoughts on how we can help others in the Name of Christ, our King. Not in our name, sometimes we can do things anonymously – where nobody knows we did it except God:

- Maybe – there’s the insert in today’s Bulletin – you could buy a \$10 gift for a boy or girl, and drop it in the box that will be in the back of the church next Sunday. Last year we had to empty it four times. If we could just empty it once, that would be ok.
- You can also help by volunteering to help ministries, here at St. Andrew’s, or in the city, or in the county.
- How about giving? This is not a sermon about ‘giving’ but this is a sermon about helping the Lord, the King, and the ministries for His people. Running a parish is a ministry, and unfortunately in this day and age, it has to run like a business. There are bills to pay, there are expenses. A King would issue a tax – commanding you what to give. This earthly king would tell you what you must do. Christ asks each one of us to give, from our heart, on a regular basis. That is what God asks. The old saying ‘time, treasure and talents’ where so many of us give of our time to the Lord, and it doesn’t have to be here at St. Andrew’s. I can use an example: I know someone that if there is a need – sings up without even asking. He is there to help! You might know someone like that in every community.

The people who sat on their hands acted surprised when Jesus said, **“you fed me, and you did this for me.”** They asked, “When did we ever do that?” The surprise of the people whose way of life was giving from their heart all of their time, giving their treasure and their talent, bringing food to the hungry, dropping food off at the food bank, or ‘Second Harvest’ – whatever it might be – those are the people who say ‘Lord, when were you hungry? When did we feed you? And Jesus said, **“When you did it for the least of these you were really doing it for me.”**

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians 6:7 calls upon us to *“serve WHOLEHEARTEDLY as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does...”* Sometimes we think if we do something for somebody else we will run short ourselves. However, Proverbs 28:27 says, *“He who gives to the poor will lack nothing.”*

When you invite Jesus into your life, to be the King and Lord of your life, you may be in

Last Sunday after Pentecost, Christ the King - November 26, 2017, Year A  
for some surprises. Some people scratch their heads at what James has to say in his Epistle – in his letter in which he says, “*Faith without works is dead.*” Some places have taken that to mean that you need to earn your way to heaven. No, we don’t earn our way to heaven. We do things to make our King smile – to give Him the joy of knowing that we are doing for others in His Name. Anything you do for people, you are REALLY doing for Him. He will bring people across your pathway and for you to opportunities to help – for one purpose - for His Glory and His Kingdom.