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**“Our Hope: The Sheep & The Goats”**

Matthew 25:31-40

**November 27, 2022**

**OPENING**

Jesus emphasizes the importance of serving others several times throughout his ministry on earth. This vision of service demonstrates the eternal impact of our action and our inaction. With the level of significance this passage portrays, we should all be called into action. We can no longer disregard the local and global needs that we see. How is God calling you to respond? Who do you see that is hungry or thirsty or naked or sick? How can you care for them with a servant heart?

**PRAYER**

Open your time together with a moment of prayer. Invite the Holy Spirit into your conversation, and ask God to give you wisdom and discernment as you read Scripture and discuss your faith. Trust in him to guide you.

**INTO THE WORD**

Take a few moments to read the Scripture verses listed below. You can read these passages out loud as a group, or silently to yourselves.

*“The Final Judgment”*

Read Matthew 25:31-40

**Matthew 25:31-40 NLT** "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit upon His glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered in His presence, and He will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will place the sheep at His right hand and the goats at His left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry, and you fed Me. I was thirsty, and you gave Me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited Me into your home. 36 I was naked, and you gave Me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for Me. I was in prison, and you visited Me.' 37 "Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see You hungry and feed You? Or thirsty and give You something to drink? 38 Or a stranger and show You hospitality? Or naked and give You clothing? 39 When did we ever see You sick or in prison and visit You?' 40 "And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these My brothers and sisters, you were doing it to Me!'

* What does it mean for us that Jesus will separate the “sheep from the goats?” Jesus compares serving “the least of these” to serving him directly. Do people in our society take this into consideration when serving others? How should it impact us? What do the righteous ones’ responses say about them? What challenges you about this passage? What encourages you?

*“Lending to the Lord”*

Read Proverbs 19:17

**Proverbs 19:17 NLT** If you help the poor, you are lending to the LORD—and He will repay you!

* Read the Scripture several times, each time focusing on a different word. You — if not you, then who? Help — how can you help? Poor — who are the poor in your life? Repay — what does it mean that the Lord will repay you? Again, we see the direct comparison of helping the poor is helping the Lord. Why do you think God uses this comparison?

*“Faith Without Good Deeds is Dead”*

Read James 2:14-26 and Ephesians 2:8-10

**James 2:14-26 NLT**  What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? 15 Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, 16 and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? 17 So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. 18 Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." But I say, "How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds." 19 You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. 20 How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless? 21 Don't you remember that our ancestor Abraham was shown to be right with God by his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete. 23 And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." He was even called the friend of God. 24 So you see, we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone. 25 Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road. 26 Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works.

**Ephesians 2:8-10 NLT** God saved you by His grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.

* Compare these passages with the concepts of grace and faith. How do these messages seem to contradict each other? How do they relate? How do they fit with the passage from Matthew? What call do we have as the body of Christ? How can these passages spur us to action?

**APPLICATION**

This week, ask God to mold your heart to beat for serving others. Find someone to keep you accountable to serving generously and often. Pray for opportunities to see the needs of the world through God’s eyes and to serve with a servant’s heart.