

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Look Out

Read Section Introduction

Read pages 93-94 *Relationship With Others: An Outward Focus*

Scripture

Matthew 25:31-46 (NRSV)

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³ and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' ⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' ⁴¹ Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Sermon Focus

Complacency is so easy. We are all so eager to please people who can move us "up the ladder" or those who are able to reciprocate our giving. And it makes sense, it feels good to be loved and cared for, to give and receive, to experience mutuality. And, if we spend all our time giving and never receiving, we will burn out.

But we have to be careful. Jesus warns us in the scripture above that how we treat "the least of these", matters. It matters to our souls, it affects our day to day lives, and it affects the lives of others in our community. We all deserve the experience of a mutuality of love and respect, but the grace of God, the love of God is so vastly beyond anything we are capable of matching that it's darn near one-sided.

Perhaps this is part of what Jesus is getting at in this parable. The love and grace of God, the

compassion of God, are so vast and large, that for us to respond to them proportionately would require a life of serving those who are in need.

When there are those who have so much, and those who have so little, we have stumbled upon a power dynamic that is undeniable. God is not going to move God's hand to change that situation, that's up to us. Jesus is clear of that in this parable. We are called to respond to those in need and when we do, we are responding also to the grace-filled relationship that we have with God. It is easy for us to be in relationships with other humans where mutuality is present and easily reciprocated. But to live a life in relationship with God and God's creation, we with power must respond. We do not have time to be complacent.

This week's self-examination questions are meant to move our gaze outward, toward our neighbor. As Christians and as Methodists this is something we know we are called to do. It's part of our tradition and it's good soul tending. Complacency is so easy. Responding to the needs of others, responding to the love of God by reaching out to those in need, working to restore and build the kingdom of God through loving relationships as we strive for a more just and mutual society, this is what we are called to do.

Questions of Self-Examination

1. Do I thank God that I am not like others?
2. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
3. Do I confidentially pass on to others what was told to me in confidence?
4. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy, or distrustful?
5. Am I honest in all my actions and words, or do I exaggerate?
6. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold resentment toward, or disregard?
7. When did I last speak to someone about my faith?

Wesley Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

Your Feedback is Appreciated!

During October, we provided this "Upward, Inward, Outward" All-Church Study where individuals watched the Sunday sermons and attended a small group to further discuss the sermon.

We would like to know your feedback on this study by completing a simple online survey by going to:

www.manchesterumc.org/fall-feedback

Your constructive feedback will help create future All-Church studies at Manchester UMC.