



The Sheep & the Goats

FAMILIES IN TRUTH

Matthew 25:31-46

In the parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus tells that not everyone will enter the kingdom of God. He will welcome only those who have faith in Him. Faith in Jesus produces a wonderful heart change.



Day #1: Sheep or Goat

In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus says He is like a Shepherd who must separate His sheep from the goats. The sheep will be accepted and rewarded. Sadly, the goats will be separated from the shepherd and punished.

Jesus' parables always taught a deeper spiritual meaning. This parable is really a story about us. It is the truth that some people will enter the kingdom of God while others will not. We are either the sheep that enter or the goats that can't. This may seem harsh for the "goats," but let's look further. We all know that *real* sheep and *real* goats cannot change what type of animal they are. But the great news is: people choose to change!

† *Anyone who believes in Christ is a new creation. The old is gone! The new has come!* - 2 Corinthians 5:17

Anyone who trusts in Jesus changes from a goat to a sheep (on the inside). God's Holy Spirit gives us a complete heart change. Jesus is the good Shepherd. Like a loving Shepherd, He protects us and even gave His life to save us. He loves all of us. He wants us all to follow Him.

(God our Savior) wants everyone to be saved. He wants them to come to know the truth. - 1 Timothy 2:4

Looking around our pasture (our homes, schools, ball fields, and churches), the sheep look a lot like the goats. We can't tell them apart just looking, but the Shepherd knows His sheep.

Tomorrow we will see that our actions give proof of our heart condition.

Day #1 continued:

* What is the condition of your heart? Are you a like sheep that trusts the Shepherd, or like a goat that does not yet believe? Jesus, the good Shepherd, wants you to know Him and follow Him (John 10:27).

Day #2: Outpouring

Go to your kitchen and get an empty cup. Take the cup and turn it sideways. What pours out of it? Nothing pours out of an empty cup! Now fill the cup with water. Tilt it over your sink. What pours out? Water of course!

Whatever is in us will pour out of us. The people whom Jesus called "sheep" were filled with the love of Jesus. That's how they were able to pour loving kindness onto others. They loved even the least important people. They gave unselfishly to those who could not give them anything in return.

The true mark of a believer is that he treats other people with love.

† *Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are My disciples.* - John 13:35

This is why Jesus could state that those who helped the poor, the sick, the hungry, and the prisoners were truly His followers. Doing these good deeds did not *make* them right with God. They did these things *because* they were right with God and filled with His love.

* Set your cup in the kitchen sink and fill it to the brim with water. Now bump the glass. Because the cup is so full, the slightest movement causes water to spill out.

When you spend time in God's word, pray, and listen to His voice, you will be so full of God's love that it would be impossible not to spill His love out onto others!

Day #3: Selfless Love

When Jesus spoke of the "goats," He was talking about those who did not follow Him. They did not

Day #3 continued:

have His love to share with others. Jesus said that they had treated **Him** badly. They didn't feed Him when He was hungry; they didn't take care of Him when He was sick.

The people were shocked by this news. They could not remember a time when they saw the Lord in need. Surely they would have helped a King if He needed it. Jesus said:

 *I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the **least of these** My brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help Me. - Matthew 25:45*

The "goats" would have helped a King, but they had never helped a common, regular person. They would have helped a King because the King would have rewarded them in return. Their help would have been motivated by selfish reasons. In their minds, they had nothing to gain by helping a common person. What could a poor, needy person possibly give them in return?

Selfish help is not what Jesus is looking for. Jesus gave each of us the ultimate help: He died to take away our sin. What could we give Him in return? Absolutely nothing. He helped us because of His unselfish love. When we are filled with the unselfish love of Jesus, that unselfish love will pour out onto others. We will help when there is nothing for us to gain in return.

 Think of one kind act that you can do TODAY without get anything in return - not even a word of praise. Maybe you can make your sister's bed in secret, or unload the dishwasher without being asked. See how quietly you can do a kind, unselfish deed. Remember, you are doing it for Jesus (Matthew 25:40).

Day #4: Head and Body

Why do you think Jesus said the "sheep" were kind to **Him** and the "goats" were unkind to **Him**, even though those people had never actually seen Jesus?

People who believe in Jesus are called the "body of Christ."

 *You are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of it. - 1 Corinthians 12:27*

Jesus is the "Head" of the body (Ephesians 5:23). Nothing can happen in the body that the head does not know about. The head can always feel

Day #4 continued:

what happens in the body.

Ask your mom or dad to pinch your hand. Can you feel it? Of course you can! When one part of the body is hurt, your head knows it. Now ask for a nice shoulder rub. Your head knows that feels great. In the same way, Jesus hurts when we are hurt, and He is blessed when we are loved and taken care of.

Isn't it amazing that Jesus loves His people so much? There is no other king who is this connected with his people. No other king loves his people this much.

 The Bible says that we are in Jesus, and He is in us (John 15:4). If you are a believer, whatever is done to you is also done to Jesus. He feels everything that you feel. You can always turn to Him, knowing that He is your caring King.

Day #5: Favorless

What if everyone wore the same mask so that you couldn't tell one person from another? You couldn't tell your sister from your mom, or your teacher from your best friend. How would you treat people then? Would you speak respectfully to everyone - just in case it was your principal you were talking to?

The Bible says that God does not show favoritism (Acts 10:34). That means:

 *God treats everyone the same. - Romans 2:11*

He does not favor kings over carpenters. He does not treat movie stars differently than mail carriers. God wants a relationship with every person, rich or poor, famous or unknown. God gives everyone the same opportunity to know Him.

Since treating people equally is part of God's character, we, too, should treat everyone the same. We should not treat our principal or pastor better than we treat our little brother. In fact, we should treat our little brother **as well as** we treat our principal or pastor. We should treat every person like we want to be treated (Matthew 7:12). With God's help, we should treat each person as well as we would treat Jesus!

 Make a nametag for each person in your family, but trade names with each other. Wear the nametags for a few hours to remind yourself that you should treat every person equally well.