



the Source

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...

After I read the scripture for this week, I started thinking and meditating about sheep and goats and *the least* among us. Before I was born, my maternal grandmother lived with my family. They had a goat. My grandmother was hanging out clothes on the line in the backyard. The legend is that Mammaw bent over to get something from the clothes basket and the goat butted her right in her bottom. The goat's days were then few in number. My parents could not bring themselves to *sacrifice* the goat for family consumption, so they donated him to a barbecue fundraiser.

So, what is the difference between actual sheep and goats, and why did Jesus select them for this lesson? In the Old Testament sacrificial system, sheep and goats were mutually accepted for most sacrifices. Sheep, as a general rule, are gentle, docile creatures. They do *wander* away while looking down and moving from one clump of grass to another. They get *lost*. Goats, on the other hand, don't usually look down while eating. They eat from bushes, tree limbs, and just about anything. Full of personality, they love to climb anything. They don't *wander*...they literally head out for an adventure. Fences are meaningless to them. In Jesus' various examples using sheep as illustrations, they usually appear to be good potential disciples. They know their master's voice, they enter by the gate, and are so loved that if they get lost, their shepherd will seek to find them. Goats seem to be more like the prodigal son. They will come home when they are good and ready. They may not be great potential disciples. They probably want to do it their way, not as the master instructs.

As the judgement of the nations begins, the Human One begins by separating the sheep from the goats. The sheep are instructed to go to the right side, and the goats are told to be on the left. The sheep ask why they are selected to inherit the kingdom, and they are told that they took care of the King when he was hungry, thirsty, naked, a stranger, ill, or in prison. They are clueless as to when they did these things for the King. He assures them that when they cared for the least, they did it for him. Those goats on the left ask when did they see the King in these conditions. The answer is that since they didn't care for the least they didn't care for the King.

So who are the least in our world? Do you drive by them at intersections? Or are the needs more subtle?

— Myra Schomburg, First Church Member

A Family Affair

Today is Christ the King Sunday, which is the last Sunday of our Christian year. On this day we celebrate and acknowledge Christ's authority. We recognize that we are subjects in the Kingdom of God.

As a family, discuss the images that come to mind when thinking about an earthly king. These may include a golden crown, royal robes, or a big throne chair. These objects may represent the king's power and authority over the people in the kingdom. Now discuss the images that come to mind when talking about Christ. These may include a crown of thorns, the cross, a simple robe and sandals. These objects represent Jesus' love and sacrifice.

Earthly kings often seek riches and advancement of their kingdom, while Jesus seeks our love. When Jesus lived on earth, he fed the hungry, healed the sick, washed his disciples' feet, and died on the cross. He lived a life of service.

Pray together as a family: On this Christ the King Sunday, we remember that we are members of Your Kingdom. We are children of God. Help us to follow your example of serving others. Amen.

— Tammy Parks, Elementary Coordinator

Monday: Matthew 25:31-33

How do you picture the judgement of the nations? There are other descriptions in the scriptures, but just focus on this and consider how you would picture the event.

- Share what you know or do not know about sheep and goats with your family or friends.

Tuesday: Matthew 25:34-40

The sheep seem to be so thoughtful and caring of others.

- How do you show your concern for "the least" in your world?

Wednesday: Matthew 25:41-44

We think we are always responsive to the needs of those we know and love, but are we truly sensitive to their needs on a long-term basis?

- Think of a friend who may still be healing from grief or illness or someone whose family member is in prison. Give that person a call or mail them a card.

Thursday: Matthew 25:45-46

How many times do you pass by or fail to recognize the needs of the least or feel inadequate to meet their needs?

- How do you think God feels about that?
- Explore the many opportunities in our community to meet the needs of other.

Friday: Children – Matthew 19:13-14

In Jesus' culture, women – especially widows, immigrants and children were considered "the least."

- How does our culture treat these groups?
- There are laws in place to protect them, but beyond that how can we personally show them the love of Jesus Christ?

