

January 14, 2018

## **"...when did we see"**

***"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats..."***

***"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance...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 visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see...'"*** Matthew 25:31-46

If believers have one failing in common it is, I believe, their tendency to make following Jesus way more complicated than it is intended to be. I have become convinced that the secret of living our faith is much more basic and simple than our current practice makes it.

As believers all of us, without exception, struggle with the same basic challenge; we struggle to choose selflessness over selfishness. The only response to the gift of grace that God has poured out on us in Jesus Christ that makes any sense at all is to live the same selfless life that he exemplified. In our selflessness we perfectly reflect his love before the world, but choosing selflessness is never easy.

Understanding what Jesus means when he challenges us to live a selfless life is not really very difficult. Our Lord summarized it perfectly for us when he said, ***"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you..."*** And then he tells us that this one rule sums up all the others. So, if we would follow Jesus we must learn to live selflessly and to demonstrate that choice through our treatment of others.

Like I said, it's easy to explain, but it is not so easy to live, is it? So, how do we start to live selflessly? The Apostle Paul shows us the beginning point in his dissertation on grace when he writes, ***"Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your reasonable act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*** (Romans 12:1-2)

Jesus would call us to follow him through self-denial, and Paul would teach us to become living sacrifices. Because we have died to ourselves, because we have chosen to live selflessly; we naturally treat others as we would like to be treated. A life devoted to serving others is the product of the Spirit's transformation of our minds and bodies.

We are called to live selfless lives of service so, when we stand before Jesus in judgment what will he commend or condemn us for? He tells us in Matthew 25 that it will be the little things; the day to day service we rendered or didn't. ***"I was hungry and you fed me...I was a stranger and you invited me in..."***

It is key, I think, to remember that both those commended and those condemned ask the same question: ***"...when did we see...?"*** When we are saved by the grace of God we choose to live under Jesus' commandment: ***"...treat others the way you would like to be treated..."*** This rule becomes our standard of conduct every day. So, when we see someone who is hungry we are compelled to respond; when we see someone who is sick we are compelled us to respond..

The transforming power of a relationship with Jesus changes who we are on the most basic level. Those of us who have experienced his grace naturally want to extend that grace to others. Our most basic needs have been and are being met by our gracious Father, and we in turn seek to meet the most basic needs of those around us. Those who have never really experienced the transforming power of God's grace in their own lives are still blinded by their own selfish natures. Because they do not see they do not serve, and because they do not serve they are condemned.

In the simplicity of God's word we are called to see those in need and to treat them as we would like to be treated. Because we have chosen to live selflessly we are compelled to serve.

