

Meditation #21: Jesus in “Need” of Love and Care

What does it say?

STUDY: Matthew 25:31-46

GOLDEN TEXT: Matthew 25:37-40 = *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? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these people, you did it to me.’*

What does it mean?

Christmas is the definitive coming of Jesus. He also comes wherever there is need. If most scientists are right, future ecological disasters will leave more and more people without sufficient food, with severely damaged housing and other tragic suffering. Many of these disasters will occur on other continents far from the behavior that contributed partially to the ravages of these ecological imbalances. All the while, many of us may feel secure many miles from the worst disasters. However, if we listen to Jesus’ teaching here, the people enduring disasters are not faceless or nameless. It is his face we see among “the least of these.” It is his name we serve, whether or not the victims have heard of him.

1. Does this teaching stretch your imagination? In the Gospel records, what did Jesus do to identify with the suffering victims?
2. Did Jesus life, death and resurrection provide the rescue we needed from the ravages of sin? What led Jesus to serve us in our need? Did Jesus also see “his image” in us?
3. Why did Jesus assume that the opportunity of doing good works for him would make all the difference to us? Was he right?
4. Does Jesus have the right to exclude us from his kingdom just because we miss opportunities of helping those in need? Why is this a defining issue? Can we be truly grateful for Jesus’ saving help without being eager to help others in need?

What are we going to do about it?

5. What can we do to see the presence of Jesus more clearly in the people that are in need now? What will help our moral imagination to act more effectively?
6. When we ourselves are victims—of ecological disasters, white-collar crimes, street crimes, domestic violence, or terrorism—do others see Jesus in us? How can we help them to see Jesus in us?
7. Should *proactive assistance* for potential victims count as helping Jesus? What if we dig the well before the drought? What if we help improve the levy before the flood? What if we give clothes even before people are utterly destitute and naked? What if we provide the fertilizer and agricultural know-how to help a community to avoid a famine in the first place? Would Jesus be pleased?

Truth To Celebrate: *Creation-care especially benefits the least advantaged people on every continent, and whatever benefits them also benefits Jesus, too, because it is a gift to him.*

Advent-Action: *Try to seal-up all air-leaks at home, at Church and at work with caulk and weather-stripping, to waste less heat in the winter... and at the same time you will feel warmer toward all of humanity, whose resources you are protecting.*

