

Home Groups | Week of September 20, 2015
Matthew 25:31-46 | Parable of the Sheep & Goats

Ice breaker question:

Have you ever visited someone in jail or in prison? What was it like? If you have not, what would you imagine it being like?

Discuss:

1. When did someone reach out to you when you were sick or hospitalized and needed support or when you felt like a stranger? Describe what happened and how you felt.
2. This passage takes place on a day when God is judging the world. Is Judgement Day something you reflect upon at all? What might be the danger of focusing too much on Judgement Day? What might be the danger of rarely reflecting on Judgement Day?
3. Why is it that Jesus focuses on people in these categories: the sick, lonely, those needing help such as food or shelter? What might Jesus say to the rich and the powerful? What does this say about Jesus' priorities?
4. ZPC is a very blessed church with talented people who have many gifts. This passage about the sheep and the goats can also be good news for us. What kind of blueprint does it give us for how we are to act and work as a church?
5. Do you know someone at ZPC or in your circle of friends or family who excels at helping the hurting, hungry, homeless, or in prison? What do you see in them that you might emulate them to be a better "sheep?"
6. Reading this passage can seem that we get to heaven or hell based on how we treat those who are sick, in prison, or need clothes food or drink or a place to stay. Is that what Jesus is saying? Why or why not? In other words, if we are saved by grace, what does this passage mean?
7. For those of you who heard the sermon, what are some practical ways ZPC is trying to meet the needs of the poor and hurting? What other ways in our everyday life can you be more like a sheep and less like a goat, stepping into ministry to reach the hungry, poor, sick, homeless or in prison?

Homework:

Some of you are already connected to a ministry that helps those who are in great need. Please share where you have served.

For those who don't yet have a way to serve, think of places you might serve those who are hungry, thirsty, sick, in prison, or in need of shelter – including the new ministry coming to ZPC in November.

If you need more ideas, ZPC partners with several local ministries where you can serve; or you can serve here in our own building through the Zionsville Food Pantry or support Kairos Prison Ministry. Check out zpc.org under "Caring Community" or "Hands On Missions" for more information.

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Upcoming events at ZPC:

- > Blood Drive | Sunday, September 27 | 10 am-1 pm | South Gym
- > Serve on the Mission Commission. Contact Steve Wright [steve.wright83@yahoo.com; 317.696.5378]

Background for Home Group Leaders:

Jesus' words are often challenging. It seems to be no coincidence that he spends much of his time healing the sick and eating with sinners and tax collectors. He calls us to do the same. We are saved by his incredible grace and called to share that grace with everyone who needs it – especially the lost and the "least of these."

[Question 1] We can probably all relate to a time when someone cared for us when we were in great need. It is humbling and so appreciated. We should be motivated then to share that kind of grace to others in great need.

[Question 2] While in the scripture there are various pictures given of Judgment Day, according to Klyne Snodgrass, the gospel of Matthew oftentimes uses the final judgement as a way of motivating discipleship. The danger of rarely reflecting on this judgment is that we can easily allow our lives to be centered on our own desires and flesh, rather than living in such a way that reveals that we realize what we see and experience now is not all there is (thereby helping to encourage us to live differently). Reflecting on Judgment Day too much can sometimes result in our becoming a people who waste time reflecting on when that may occur rather than on simply allowing that to be God's purview. It can also sometimes result in our trying to decide who is in and who is out, instead of living life as God has called us to and allowing him to be the judge on the throne.

[Question 3] Jesus must have cared deeply for those on the margins of society. It seems much of his teaching focuses on caring for the poor and offering justice or compassion for those who need it. Jesus also challenges the rich and the powerful to use our talents well; to whom much is given, much is required.

[Question 4] At ZPC, we are gifted with many entrepreneurial and talented people who are very generous with time and resources. Perhaps we can focus even more on where we are putting our talents to work as a church.

[Question 5] We probably all know someone who works with the homeless, the sick, or those who are hungry or those in prison. When they serve with great grace, it is very humbling and inspiring and thus can encourage us to do the same.

[Question 6] Ephesians 2:8-10 speaks to being saved by grace and also being called to do good works which God prepares in advance. James 2:14 (and following verses) says that faith and deeds go hand in hand. When we have faith, we are called to live like Jesus, and serve the way that Jesus did.

[Question 7] ZPC is starting an initiative to help serve homeless families right here in our building a couple of times a year. There will be room for many volunteers on those weeks. However, not all of us will be able to serve in that ministry, so where else can we make a difference for those Jesus calls us to touch?