



## **Father Joseph's Outline for Meatfare Sunday**

Matthew 25:10-14 - Sunday 02/22/2009

**“He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left.” (Matthew 25:32-33)**

### **Why was this reading chosen for today?**

The Church chose this parable as an introduction to the Great Lent for many reasons.

- ✓ To remind Christians that part of their mission is to attend especially to those who are in pain.
- ✓ To prompt Christians to support the weak, such as the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned.
  - “For travelers by land, sea, and air, for the sick, the suffering, the captives, and for their salvation, let us pray to the Lord.” (9<sup>th</sup> petition of the Great Litany at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy)
- ✓ To emphasize that Great Lent and fasting from dairy and the consumption of meat is not profitable, unless it is accompanied by showing love to the weaker people of the earth.
- ✓ To emphasize that **LOVE** is the ultimate criteria of the eternal judgment.

### **Insight into this parable**

- In the tradition of the people of the Bible, the side of honor is the right; the side of lesser importance is the left.
- The righteous people are described as sheep, because sheep by nature are known for being gentle, meek, and patient, enduring hardship, never hurting anyone, and obediently following the shepherd.
- The unrighteous are depicted as goats, because goats are known for undesirable traits such as being moody, prideful, belligerent, rebellious, argumentative, and disobedient.
- The second coming of the Christ (contrary to His first coming) will be impossible to ignore, as it will *not* have the quiet and low profile as the first one was. The Christ will not be teaching or exhorting anymore, rather will be executing judgment.
  - “And He will come again with glory to judge the living and dead. His kingdom shall have no end.” (Nicene Creed)
- To the righteous, the Lord will say: “Come, you who are blessed by My Father” (Matthew 25:34).

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- He addresses the righteous first because His nature is good. He loves goodness and hates evil.
- To the unrighteous, the Lord will say: “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).
- The Lord did not curse the unrighteous, because He died for them, but their *own* actions cursed them.
  - God prepared paradise for all human beings: “Come...inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).
  - God did not prepare the eternal fire for people, but rather for the devil: “Depart...into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).
  - God wanted from the very start of the world to grant Paradise to all human beings. Being deprived of Paradise will be the result of one’s own actions, and not God’s decision.

### **Practical implementations of this parable**

- Since one individual person can excel in one or a few areas only, then each person should focus on that area(s).
  - Examples: ministering to the sick, imprisoned, widows, orphans, addicts, special needs, etc.
- Those who do not have these kinds of talents are still given the opportunity to contribute by increasing their financial support toward some or all of these areas.

### **Very important conclusions**

- The Lord is prompting us to be vigilant, prayerful, sensitive toward others, and charitable at all times.
- Earthly wealth, glory, and fame will not be of any benefit on the day of Judgment; rather, the righteous and charitable way of life leads us to the eternal reward in Paradise.
- People who do not follow the prompt of their inner soul to render mercy will be condemned by their own conscience, as their own actions will present irrefutable evidence against them.

### **Prayer**

O Lord Jesus Christ, I confess You as the Judge who will come to judge the world on the day of Your glorious and second coming. Give me the wisdom and the knowledge, O Lord, to render actions of mercy in Your name to all those who are in need that You send my way. O Loving Lord, do not let me fall into the trap of caring only about myself and my needs. I desire Your glory with my whole heart, O Lord: do not let me deprive myself from it because of my own faults and sinful actions. But rather, grant that I may be counted worthy to be numbered among the sheep, on whom You bestow eternal life. Amen.

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