**Final Judgment Sermon**

**Text:** Matthew 25:31-46

**Theme:** Which one and I?

 You can easily tell that dogs and cats are very different animals. A dog looks at you with those big eyes, tilts its head to one side and says to itself, “You love me, you feed me, you care for me, you take me for walks... you must be my master”. A cat looks at you with those piercing eyes and thinks to itself “You love me, you feed me, you care for me, you stroke me when I sit on your lap ... I must be your master”.

 Animals look and act different. Some are easily distinguishable. You would have no trouble telling the difference between an Elephant and a mouse. But what about the difference between a sheep and a goat? In our text for today Jesus gives us a picture. He says there are only two kinds of people-- sheep people and goat people. In this story he makes us look closely at ourselves and ask; **“Which one am I?”**

  Sheep listen to their shepherd. Follow him. Goats have a mind of their own. A shepherd protects the sheep from the dangers of the environment that they live in. Goats are troublesome, unruly and often destructive to the environment. A farmer once said; “don’t pen a goat with your horse, he will chew off its tail!’

 **Which one are you?—a sheep or a goat?** “**When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.**

 Note the Son of man is the Old Testament title given to Jesus. He is coming back. Note the difference between Jesus’ first and second coming. In his first coming, Jesus emptied himself, coming into this world as a servant (Philippians 2:5-11). Was born in a stable and cradled in a manger. As a man, he had no place to lay his head (8:20). There was purpose in all this—that he might dwell among us, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (! Cor. 5:21) This he accomplished there on that hill outside of Jerusalem. Then, before he ascended back to heaven, he promised to come again.

 In his second coming Jesus will no longer be in that humble state. Having been exalted and sitting at the right hand of God the Father in heaven, he will come in all of his glory—with all of his angels—sit on his throne and gather all the nations before him—to judge both the living and the dead! **34Then the King (Jesus) will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35For I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. 36I was lacking clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.’**

 It looks to me like Jesus is saying here that your good works will get you into heaven. Now don’t get me wrong. Jesus is not saying we are saved by good works. But our behavior demonstrates something we all need withing us. A faith that is living and active. “**For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—  not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:8-10)** How we treat other reveals who we are, whether we are sheep or goats.

Jesus makes it crystal clear who the sheep are. **Then the righteous will answer him,** ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? 38When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or lacking clothes and clothe you? 39When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ 40“The King will answer them, ‘Amen[[1]](#footnote-1) I tell you: Just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.’ Who answers Jesus? The sheep. The righteous. Those who believe in Jesus and live their faith. Faith in action.

But what about the goats? This part of the text is a warning. Don’t be a goat! Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire, which is prepared for the Devil and his angels. 42For I was hungry and you did not give me food to eat. I was thirsty and you did not give me anything to drink. 43I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, lacking clothes and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not take care of me.’

44“Then they will also answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or lacking clothes or sick or in prison and did not serve you?’

45“At that time he will answer them, ‘Amen I tell you: Just as you did not do it for one of the least of these, you did not do it for me.’ 46And they will go away to eternal punishment.

 Today the word GOAT has taken on a new meaning. It is used to refer to an athlete who is at the top of his game. The news media will use the term to compare athletes and say who is the GOAT? The greatest of all time!

 Did you know that the Devil is portrayed in paintings from the Middle Ages as a goat man with goat legs and horns ON HIS HEAD. The Old GOAT wants to is get a hold of you and make you his. To get your Goat! Make you think you should be the GOAT- The greatest of all time. How does he do it? He whispers in your ear; “ Be your own boss. Do what you want. Get what is yours! Why help others. Look out for yourself! You don’t need Jesus! What has he ever done for you. And why help others. What have they ever don for you!

 Now, look again at the two animals in this story. The sheep and the goat. Then look at Jesus—is he the GOAT? The greatest of all time. Yes- The King, the one who will come in glory to Judge the living and the dead. But look at him closely! See his hands and his feet. Look at his side, and the marks on his head---he is the lamb. The Lamb of God who took away our sin—the greatest of all time indeed!

 Now take another look at Jesus’ hands. Right here on this statue. Open, loving welcoming hands. Then look at your hands. When you were just an infant, you came out with your hands closed. And every time somebody put their little finger in yours, you would wrap your hand around it, hold on tight, and not let go. As a toddler, you started grabbing rattles and lit­tle toys. When another child came in your direction and wanted to take one away from you, you said, "Mine," and held on tight.

 The Devil knows that we are by nature… clutchers. It doesn't matter who or what tries to convince us to relax our grip. We have a sinful natural response when it comes to giving up what we want….. especially time, talent or treasure—the green stuff. We grip hard. Close our hands.

 This is where Jesus comes in again. He says, look at my hands. See the marks. She what I have don for you. My hands are open. Loving, caring. I am you shepherd. You are my sheep. I have made you mine. You listen to me! You follow me. So he says to us today; “Look at your hands one more time”. Let me open them them so you can show you understand my love for you.

 Now look around. Do you see them? Do you see the opportunities all around you to share my love for you with others—not just the physical things they need but the thing they need most of all—tell them of my love for them. Look at your hands one last time. One thing is certain. If you live deeply enough with a sense of God's love and generosity, your hands will start looking more like his---0pen. As we go out of church today, take a look to you right. The table there, where open hands have helps not just with the physical but also the spiritual;--the cards of thanksgiving and invitation that have been place in almost every donation!

 So, on this Last Judgment Sunday. Especially with theses strange difficult and uncertain times we are living in. Be the sheep-- And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, **25**not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

**Amen**

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)