

March 15, 2020

W Asheville Pres

Matt. 25:31-46

31“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit **on the throne** of his glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before **the king**, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 34 Then **the king** will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ 37 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? 38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39 And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ 40 And **the king** will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ 41 Then **the king** will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; 42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ 44 Then they also will answer, ‘**Lord**, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a

stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ 45 Then **the king** will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

The Roots of Socialism

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Our call as Christians is not simply to worship God. It is a call to Love and Serve.

We are good about attending worship. Well, most of us are.

Unfortunately many gather at church do so to exert power and control over the affairs of all.

THAT IS NOT CHURCH.

Some of us gather to be nurtured by those around us. Again, often what happens is we are judged as not being self-sufficient.

THAT IS NOT CHURCH.

Many of us come to church to socialize. It is our club. Often our private club.

We accept new members but they are often not truly included and the established families work to retain control. **THAT IS NOT CHURCH.**

Our call as Christians is not simply to worship God. It is a call to Love and Serve.

As we gather this day under the cloud of epidemic and fear, what do we truly desire this day?

PAUSE

I desire comfort. I desire prayers. I desire friendship. I desire nurture. And despite your preconceived notions about Preachers, we long for this support as we strive to serve you.

But we are not the focus of our call. We are called to gather and worship God so we are strengthened for our call - **To love and Serve.**

Our call to love and serve the least of these leads to an obvious set of duties. I call it the Roots of Socialism. First let's clearly define what Socialism is: It means the haves serve the have nots. It means the resources of the many haves provide for the needs of the ALL.

Do you want a standing military prepared to fight and deploy? The few cannot do this. Do you want police, fire, public water and power, healthcare you can afford, interstate highways, SSA, medicaid for the dependent, the list goes on. How are these services funded? ALL pay for them through taxes and fees. Some will pay more than others. As Christ COMMANDS: 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

So if we work against the provision of all these vital services in our community, we are DISOBEDIENT.

IF we don't work diligently to proclaim the Good news of our Lord and Savior, we are disobedient.

How do we love and serve? I think the Hippocratic oath gives us a guide. DO NO HARM. Simple enough to say, not always easy to do. Clearly we are not to actively work against the welfare of others. That would make us one of goats. But do no harm may mean we act in ways that do not cause harm to others.

In this time of fear and concern for the coming epidemic, and it is coming, how do we do no harm to our family, friends, neighbors and church members?

The best action is how we should live thru any epidemic, HYBERNATE. Stay home. Do without. Cancel college and pro sports events. Suspend the state courts. Cancel Concerts and close Arts venues. Cancel Disneyland and Carowinds. Scale back necessary businesses to limited hours. **Suspend church gatherings.**

Yes, I said suspend church gatherings. That is a disruption at the roots of Christianity. Surely, we must gather. No we don't.

I am meeting with the Session after this to discuss suspending all gatherings here until Easter. We will review circumstances in a few weeks and pray about our continued plan.

What can you do? You can follow the sermons on line. You can notify your leaders of special needs in our church and the community beyond. You can PRAY. FOR US AND ALL OTHERS.

You can call, text or email to check on others and keep in contact with family and friends.

I ask you remember the needs of maintaining our church building and staff. We need you to be determined in your giving. I am giving today to cover my offering for the next few weeks. I hope you will do the same. And PRAY.

Remember the words of the Christ: ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’

May all of us be judged true and faithful servants of all and our Lord.
Amen.