



THE SABBATH CIRCLES HOME SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Unit Theme: Illumination of mind and heart

Lesson connected to Sunday, January 19, 2020

Today's Scripture: Matthew 25:37-45

Key Verse: "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." Matthew 25:45 (Underlining mine)

Contexts of the Scripture:

- The Gospel of Matthew is the first book of the New Testament or Christian Scriptures. It was written between approximately 80-90CE.
- Tradition has it as having been written by the disciple, Matthew, but this is far from certain. It is clear, however, that the Gospel was written by someone familiar with Judaism and the geography of Palestine.
- Matthew is the only Gospel to use explicitly the word "church" to describe the earliest gatherings of followers of Jesus. Thus, it holds many reference points for churches today whose contemporary problems have more in common with Matthew's church than we might imagine possible.
- Today's story appears near the end of Jesus' time of active ministry and is known as the "Parable of the Sheep and Goats" or the "Parable of the Nations." It is often cited as Jesus' definitive statement on caring for the least of these as a requirement for demonstrating one's love for the all loving God.

Questions to go deeper:

- This story is often seen as the ultimate description by Jesus of the importance of caring for the least of these. Why is that? Who are the least of these?
- One of the intriguing aspects of this text is that it explicitly spells out what happens to those who do respond to those in need and what happens to those who do NOT respond to those same needs. What are those specific consequences of each action?
- Sometimes people who consider themselves to be faithful Christians want to put conditions on who is worthy to receive help in precisely the categories of need Matthew describes. Does Jesus put any qualifiers on his admonishments to offer assistance? Why do you suppose some try to do that and still consider themselves Christian?
- This weekend is our Homeless Awareness Weekend at our church. How do you see this text to be present in our efforts this weekend? What do you understand the purpose of this weekend to be? Why does it matter to do what we're doing?

Activity possibilities: SEE NEXT PAGE

- **Family activities:**

- Where would this fall on the bible timeline? Hint: Check out the context info above!
- During the Vigil this Saturday we are collecting donations of specific items for both WARM and the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center. For PNC it's breakfast foods. Make a special trip to the grocery store together to buy all your favorite breakfast foods and then come to the Vigil and put them in the donation barrel!
- We're also collecting small toiletry items specifically for the homeless living on the streets which is why the items should be small or travel size since the homeless must carry everything they own with them. Consider putting together a little kit of toiletry items and including a note to let whoever receives the kit know they are being prayed for.
- Stop by the Vigil at church if only for a few minutes, long enough to get a sense of what it might be like to live without shelter in our community.

- **Younger children activities:**

- Check out this link to some coloring and activity pages about this story:
https://www.google.com/search?q=the+least+of+these+coloring+page&rlz=1C1CHBF_enUS733US733&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=CGUfOoLaLhN6lM%253A%252CmfsO8rBZ_aTb9M%252C_&vet=1&usg=AI4-kTct2I_kj94HzoEGFY4A5hLtNvlRw&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjDrvOnk4vnAhXqzVkKHdRpB5IQ9QEwAXoECAkQBw#imgsrc=CGUfOoLaLhN6lM:&vet=1
- Take out a piece of plain white paper and have an adult help you trace around each of your hands, placed side by side. Then, draw all around your hands foods for someone who is hungry. Finally, under the drawing of your hands, print the words: "I can care for the least of these." If you can't write or print it yourself, ask someone older to help you.

- **Older children and youth activities:**

- See above family and younger child activities.
- Check out this Youtube video showing an incredibly talented musician who just happens to be homeless:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PjYUODTUsvc>

What does this video teach you about the homeless? What questions would you ask the man if you could speak with him??

Remember, Rev. Ruth is always happy to answer your questions and help you find more information on anything in the Bible that interests you! Catch up with her through the church or come to the Savoy Bookstore and Café any Thursday afternoon between 2-4pm.