

## The Least of These

Christ spoke of the sheep that will be on His right hand at the final judgment, “Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, **when saw we thee** an hungred, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink? **When saw we thee** a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*? Or **when saw we thee** sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as **ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.**” (Mat 25:37-40). And of the goats on His left, “Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as **ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me**” (Mat 25:45). The difference between the two is whether their good deeds were done to “the least of these.”

Christ defined “the least of these” as the poor, maimed, lame, and blind as opposed to friends, brethren, kinsmen, and rich neighbors, “When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not **thy friends**, nor **thy brethren**, neither **thy kinsmen**, nor *thy rich neighbours*; lest they also bid thee again, and **a recompence be made thee**. But when thou makest a feast, call **the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind**: And thou shalt be blessed; for **they cannot recompense thee**: for thou shalt be **recompensed at the resurrection of the just.**” (Luk 14:12-14). His point is that our good deeds must be without any expectation of recompense in return. And since those esteemed by society as the least “cannot recompense thee,” then it’s doing good to them that indicates pure motives in the heart. Therefore, sheep as opposed to goats are those that hope for reward later from God expressed by good deeds to those that can’t reward them now.

Christ also taught, “**For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye?** for sinners also love those that love them. **And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye?** for sinners also do even the same. **And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye?** for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and **do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great**, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and *to the evil.*” (Luk 6:32-35). When we love those that don’t love us in return, and we do good “hoping for nothing again,” it expresses our hope for reward in eternal life.

Jesus taught, “Take heed that ye **do not your alms [giving] before men, to be seen of them**: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven ... **That thine alms [giving] may be in secret [kryptos 2927]: and thy Father which seeth in secret [kryptos 2927] himself shall reward thee openly**” (Mat 6:1,4). He emphasized our motives for giving. It’s our actions that indicate if our treasure is on earth or in heaven, which in turn reveals the motives of our hearts, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mat 6:21). Are we giving to get recognition and praise right now from people, or later from God? If we’re seeking praise from God, then our giving will be in *kryptos* or “secret.”

Paul said of those seeking eternal life, “To them who by **patient continuance in well doing** seek for glory and honour and immortality, **eternal life**” (Rom 2:7), that they continue doing good, waiting patiently to be rewarded in eternity. He went on to say, “In the day when **God shall judge the secrets [kryptos 2927] of men by Jesus Christ** according to my gospel” (2:16). God’s people will be judged by Jesus Christ—if their good deeds were done openly to receive praise from people, or secretly to receive praise from God. “But he *is a Jew [praise]*, which is one **inwardly [kryptos 2927]**; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; **whose praise is not of men, but of God**” (2:29). The name “Jew” means “praise.” The true people of God live up to their name—they seek praise from God.

The sheep labor for reward in eternity: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that **your labour is not in vain in the Lord**” (1Co 15:58); “And let us not be weary in well doing: for **in due season we shall reap**, if we faint not” (Gal 6:9); “**For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love**, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Heb 6:10); “that they may rest from their labours; and **their works do follow them**” (Rev 14:13).

At the judgment, many will boast of the good things they did in His name, “**Many will say to me in that day**, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied **in thy name?** and **in thy name** have cast out devils? and **in thy name** done many wonderful works?” (Mat 7:22). But He will reply “Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of **the least of these, ye did it not to me**” (Mat 25:45). What will count as done toward Him will be how we treated “the least of these.”