

1 motivate

To be a Biblical Community
Where the Gospel of Jesus Christ
Transforms lives
Renews the city
And Impacts the world

Renews the city
TO THE LEAST OF THESE

TO THE LEAST OF THESE

What do we mean by this?
Someone who is Hopeless & Helpless
We don't mean someone who is less than us or insignificant

It is someone at this point in life who needs someone else's help

God has given us that opportunity to provide that help

Many of us know exactly what this is like
WE ALL NEED TO BE ASKING
WHAT IS OUR ROLE IN SERVING THE LEAST OF THESE?

Blue – 329
White - 708

Matthew 24 & 25 – on the coming of the King and the Kingdom

This passage is about – THE KING HAS RETURNED

THIS TEACHING IS MEANT TO SOBER US

- Jesus is getting down to the basics with this teaching
- Jesus gives extremes pictures to teach – It is the Rabbi in Him

THIS IS NOT A NEW TEACHING

This is a common theme in the OT is to care for the powerless

The stranger
The widow
The fatherless

2 motivate

The needy

Among you – in our city
And in our world

Daniel 7 – Ezekiel 37
Joel 3

Matthew 25:31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. **32** Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. **33** And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

SCENE

Throne Room of the Returning King

Final Judgment that the righteous King will oversee

- Christ has returned and gathered up the nations
- There is a mandatory meeting of all humanity throughout history

Acts 17:31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

Revelation 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. **12** And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SHEEP AND GOATS

3 motivate

- Goats are always jumping over their fences or finding clever ways to open the gates that hold them in. When it comes to escape, goats are artists.
- Sheep tend to stay put. This makes them easy to herd.
- Sheep blindly follow each other.
- Sheep are paranoid and loyal, goats are open and curious.
- **Goats are impulsive and unpredictable, devious and contrary. Goats are never content with what they have.**
- **Goats are not very good followers. Goats prefer leading or going off on their own.**
- **A goat follows only its own lead, creating disunity when he comes in contact with others in the flock.**
- A sheep follows its Shepherd, peacefully moving forward with the flock. He is content to be led because he has faith in the shepherd. A sheep responds to his Shepherd's voice and goes where He directs.
- Because of his independent nature, he often finds himself in contention with the Shepherd for leadership of the flock, leading some astray.

**BEFORE WE MOVE ON it is important to make sure we know
WHAT THIS NEXT PASSAGE IS NOT SAYING**

**This is not a new theology
A works based theology**

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Acts 10:43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

34 Then the King will say to those on his right (to the sheep), 'Come, you who 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 drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

4 motivate

37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'

40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

The surprise of the righteous makes it impossible to think that good works some how redeem us

Redemptive faith shows itself in action

How do you know that faith is at work in you? You are living out the values of the Son.

Service does not save us but is an indication we are saved

As John Calvin wrote, "It is . . . faith alone which justifies, and yet the faith which justifies is not alone."

We are not earning God's Favor through our serving

Faith produces activity that is God honoring

**WHO ARE THE LEAST OF THESE?
WHO ARE WE SERVING?**

40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Those who are fellow Followers of Jesus

Part of the reason is because

IF WE DON'T who will

BUT NOT ONLY Fellow Followers of Jesus

But, also, our enemy

Luke 6:27 "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

5 motivate

What do we mean by this?

Someone who is Hopeless & Helpless

We don't mean someone who is less than us or insignificant

It is someone at this point in life who needs someone else's help

God has given us that opportunity to provide that help

Many of us know exactly what this is like

MATTHEW 25: 41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, 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 no drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'

44 Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, WHEN did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' 45 Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, 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."

6 motivate

WHY DON'T WE SERVE THE LEAST OF THESE?

**Could we end up standing with the GOATS?
With the group who says – WHEN?**

As followers of Jesus we profess our desire to be spiritual
It is implied in our identifying with Jesus

We attend church
We sing songs
We are part of a small group
We hang out with our Christian friends

We even allow Jesus to work on some of the behaviors and thought patterns we might have that don't honor him

But, at the end of the day many of us want to be spiritual without being inconvenienced

Whether we are willing to admit it or not we are more interested in a spirituality of convenience than a spirituality of sacrifice

We want the appearance of being engaged spiritually without the cost that comes with it

The cost of a whole life given over to the service of our King and those He tells us He is interested in – the **LEAST OF THESE** - is more than we are willing to give

Yes, we are interested in the poor and the needy and the helpless

Ofcourse we are
Who wouldn't say they not interested

But, the life I chose to live has become more important to me than the life I am called to live – repeat

I want a life of comfort and convenience

We may say we have a commitment to justice and what is fair, but we don't want to have to get our hands dirty to see it happen.

It is easier for us to be critical of what is happening or what is not happening

7 motivate

But to take up the cause by giving our life to something . . .

That may interfere with my date life

Or My watching every episode of BREAKING BAD over the weekend

Or My softball team making the playoffs

Or My trips out of town

It is far too easy to say – that is not my problem

It may be a problem

It may be someone's problem

It is a sad problem

But, it is not my problem

We believe or we live like we believe THAT
God understands the demands of my life and He gives me a pass

We want a spirituality without being inconvenienced

Sacrifice for the sake of others?

Adjust my time to make it available to the **LEAST OF THESE?**

Re-allocate my resources to help address the needs in our city?

**For some of us we see the problem and we figure out how little we can do
So that we can say we are at least doing something**

I need to do just enough to pacify my guilt

We love the idea of buying a pair shoes knowing that a second pair will be going to a child in need

We take up the ALS ice bucket challenge knowing our money is going to defeat a dreaded disease

But, really, what is being asked of us?

AND we have turned each of these and many like it to serve us

8 motivate

Notice what I have done

Notice how generous I have been as we are quick to post it on our Facebook page or tweet it out

Buy a pair of shoes

Take an ice challenge

But we will not walk down the block to tutor kids at **C2A** or **BY THE HAND CLUB**

Or give up a weekend to serve at **BREAKTHROUGH**

Or

Take a Monday night to mentor a high school student at **GRIP**

Stephen Colbert - Host of Comedy Central's - The Colbert Report

If this is going to be a Christian nation that doesn't help the poor, either we have to pretend that Jesus was just as selfish as we are, or we've got to acknowledge that he commanded us to love the poor and serve the needy without condition and then admit that we just don't want to do it.

We just don't want to be inconvenienced

James 1:27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Spirituality without sacrifice is empty and meaningless

It quickly becomes just an activity instead of a dynamic relationship with the God of the universe

It demands nothing from us

It does not push us to live outside our comfort and therefore there is no reason to grow in our faith in Jesus

Authentic Christianity - means to meet the demands of Jesus by His example and by his command

TO THE LEAST OF THESE

The powerless among us

9 motivate

The needy among us
Here in our city and around the world

GOSPEL

Where would we be if Jesus was unwilling to be inconvenienced for us?

We need to remind ourselves that Jesus moved from the comfort of the glory of the throne and was willing to be inconvenienced by coming to earth to live and to die for us

We are the LEAST OF THESE SPIRITUALLY

We have forgotten that we were and continue to be **LEAST OF THESE** at one time SPIRITUALLY

That every one of us stands in a place where we are spiritually powerless

HUNGRY & THIRSTY

Blaise Pascal - (1623 –1662)

French mathematician, physicist, inventor

There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus.

We were created to seek out what fills this vacuum
In our hunger and thirst for truth God meets us

Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

STRANGER

There was a time when we were **estranged** from God

10 motivate

And God moved toward us

Ephesians 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God

NAKED

We were needy of righteous clothing

Clothed in the Righteousness of God

2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

SICK

Spiritually Sick

But, **Isaiah 53:5** tells us that --- by the wounds of Jesus we are healed

Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

PRISON

The Gospel has brought freedom to us as lived in a spiritual prison that some of us were not even aware of at the time

Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives --- to set at liberty those who are oppressed

11 motivate

We were and we continue to be the LEAST OF THESE

The GOSPEL, the good news of the work of Jesus on our behalf

Feeds our deepest longings

Quenches our Spiritual Thirst

Turns us from strangers to sons and daughters through adoption

Cloths us in righteousness

Heals us in our spiritual neediness

Sets us free from the prison of our rebellion

The GOSPEL has stirred in us the Spiritual DNA given to us at birth by our creator

The DNA that seeks to serve as we have been served

We have been the receiver of it

We have seen it modeled for us

We are now empowered to serve THE LEAST OF THESE in this same way

We know we are growing spiritually when we begin to see the needs of others and don't immediately think of the inconvenience it will cause for us

SO WHAT DO WE DO TO SERVE THE LEAST OF THESE

THE GOALS OF RENEW

PRAY: asking God to intercede for the peace and prosperity of our city, and that many may be drawn to His Son

Our very own Dr. John Fuder were instrumental in putting together for the 3rd time Friday and the first time outside of a church
Several hundred folks from across our city gathered in Daley Plaza to pray for our city

Pastors and Churches from the North Side, the South Side, the West Side gathered to pray

12 motivate

For elected officials

Our first responders

Those hurt by violence

Those who are committing violence

For the peace of our city

That we would serve together as an unified church to see the RENEWAL of our city

This was followed up with prayer Friday night and Saturday throughout neighborhoods throughout our city

Learn: that we may discover the issues that surround Chicago, and discern, as Christ followers, what knowledge we need in order to engage

Act: to engage with the least of these

Hungry, Thirsty & Need of Clothes

HOMELESS

Breakthrough Ministries

Pacific Garden Mission

The BRIDGE – ex offenders

Lydia Home – Orphans and short term crisis care for children

WE SUPPORT PROGRAMS THAT HELP FOLKS WITH JOBS

13 motivate

Breaking ground Ministries

Harambee – that teaches high schools students how to tuck point

CARA Jobs Program

TUTORING AND MENTORING PROGRAMS

C2A

By the Hand Club

GRIP

Stranger

International Ministries

Dr. Bill Bray, President, Overseas Students Mission

A record-breaking 600,000 international leaders are studying in the USA alone, but less than 25% ever visit an American home or stay with a Christian family.

BRIDGES INTERNATIONAL

INTER VARSITY INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MINISTRY

World Relief – works with refugees being resettled in here in Chicago

14 motivate

A bunch of small groups and families have adopted a refugee families

Help them get settled

Find furniture

Navigate all the Chicago things like drivers license and such

Where to shop

Sick

Deacon Ministry

Small Groups

Prison

We support a chaplain at the Cook County Jail

ALPHA in the Prison

Visiting people in the prison

Mike and I visit a gentleman

Screaming through the little messed hole

Rusted from all the spit of people before us

Celebrate: that we may experience joy because God has us in our beloved Chicago for such a time as this

We celebrate life change

We celebrate when someone becomes a follower of Jesus

When the Gospel heals a marriage in our city

When a follower of Jesus takes responsibility for his or her life choices

We celebrate reading and math scores going up for the kids we are tutoring

We celebrate fathers who can give Xmas gifts to their children through the Xmas Store we host

15 motivate

We celebrate Refugee families not feeling overwhelmed with a new country, new city and a new culture

We celebrate high school students who have a mentor fully engaged with them

We celebrate people finding jobs

And high school students learning a job skill with Harambee while having spiritual conversations about life

We celebrate international students being invited into an American home and hearing about Jesus for the first time in their lives

May we NOT every grow tired of CELEBRATING THE WORK OF THE GOSPEL IN OUR CITY

EXTEND: we reach out to others and invite them into what God has called Park to do in this city

One of the best apologetics for Jesus is you inviting a friend who is not a follower of Jesus to join you as you serve THE LEAST OF THESE

Spiritual DNA put into us by the creator

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

Ask yourself – what are you doing to serve THE LEAST OF THESE?

VISIT A TABLE OUTSIDE AND GET SOME INFO OR SIGN UP

Challenge your small group to serve together as a number of you do