Cycle A Nov. 22, 2020

The Feast of Christ the King

Title: The difference between a goat and a sheep, (or a bear and a mouse)?

Theme: Goats feed off others and the land, a finite resource, sheep learn how to feed one another, creating infinity!



Title: The Last Judgement Notes: Amiens, West Façade, central portal, tympanum. Theme: “Weighing of Souls by Archangel Michael” Date: 1220-1240 Building: Cathedrale d’Amiens Object: Relief Structure, Stone City: Amiens, France

**Note on Art Illustration:**  In Egyptian Mythology when a Pharaoh dies their heart is weighed on a scale against a feather. Bad deeds weigh a heart down, then he does not pass from the heart to the next. If the heart is heavier than a feather he does not rise on the other side of the grave which means the sun doesn’t rise the next day in their Mythology. It helps us to see the possible source for the scale being used in the last judgment artistic illustration

Story***: A Library Book for Bear***

 Author: Bonny Becker Illustrated by Katie MacDonald Denton

Sunday Gospel

Mt. 25:31-46

**Key verse: 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did
for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.’** Jesus said to his disciples:
"When the Son of Man comes in his glory,
and all the angels with him,
he will sit upon his glorious throne,
and all the nations will be assembled before him.
And he will separate them one from another,
as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.
He will place 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.
For I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
a stranger and you welcomed me,
naked and you clothed me,
ill and you cared for me,
in prison and you visited me.’
Then the righteous will answer him and say,
'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you,
or thirsty and give you drink?
When did we see you a stranger and welcome you,
or naked and clothe you?
When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’
And the king will say to them in reply,
'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did
for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.’
Then he will say to those on his left,
'Depart from me, you accursed,
into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.
For I was hungry and you gave me no food,
I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,
a stranger and you gave me no welcome,
naked and you gave me no clothing,
ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.’
Then they will answer and say,
'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty
or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison,
and not minister to your needs?’
He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you,
what you did not do for one of these least ones,
you did not do for me.’
And these will go off to eternal punishment,
but the righteous to eternal life."

**Making the Connection for Parents and Catechists:**

This is a very important parable of Jesus’. Placed by the church on the Feast of Christ the King as the world is presented to the Son of Man returning in his glorified state, signifying the second coming. Jesus comes into the world as an infant, with great humility entering into the human state, validating humanity as good. Jesus, through his death and resurrection moves in the world in his resurrected state. Present among the disciples for 40 days they could recognize him through their senses, not by sight. With his Ascension, Jesus ascends into heaven to live in his glorified state. Jesus promised not to leave us alone, thus sending us the Holy Spirit enlivening humanity with divinity. The fulfillment of this state is the work Jesus missioned his disciples and us to do. This parable points out what the church and world should look like upon Jesus’s return, giving clear directives at the end of Jesus earthly ministry what the goals are. If you get the outcome, you will get the mission, that is the message here.

The first clue is how Jesus asks people to be assembled. All the nations will come before him but Jesus does not leave them in subset tribal groups. A very important message to all Christians. If we get this, it can change the way we live and how we function as faith communities. All which is the point of the parable. Jesus doesn’t say, “Alright the Eastern Church on this side and Western Church on that side. Or from our Western divisions. “The Protestants on this side and Catholics over here, Evangelicals on this side”. Nor does he say,”Alright Africa over here, Asia over here and the Americas over there”. Jesus says, “Goats to the left” and “sheep to the right”. If this is the way Jesus is going to divide the world upon his return in glory, we should pay a lot of attention to what he is saying here. What would a new world order look like based on sheep and goats? To the first century listener, they knew goats live for themselves climbing mountains off alone on their own in search for food. Goats represent a state of self-centered narcissisms. Sheep on the other hand are communal beings. Sheep stick together. Sheep find safety as a flock. Yet here Jesus is calling sheep even more. Jesus is saying following the shepherd isn’t enough. Go to the next step! This is how heaven comes to earth.

How can our story about Mouse and Bear and the significance of goats and sheep in the first century help us to understand a new world order? In our story we meet Bear – a curmudgeon character who lives quite a grumpy and preferably isolated existence. Bear has all he needs, humph! Luckily for Bear he has a very determined and loving friend in the world, mouse. Mouse coaxes bear out of his house with a trip to the library, where Bear is like a bull in a china closet. Bear says, “Why should I go to the library, I have seven books that is all I need?” I have enough to feed myself, why bother with anything, or anyone else? This is a distinctive character trait of a goat. Bear slowly yields to mouse and is transformed by a beautiful experience of nourishment of the heart.

 That is what Jesus is asking of his disciples, to learn the way of mouse, to learn how to bring people from hellish lives of isolation and anger, to lives of communal joy, friendship, care and love. We have to be about the other to grow heaven on earth. This is what the evolved Christian and mature Christian community looks like. This is what Jesus is hoping to find upon his return in glory. He leaves it up to us. No one is left behind or goes hungry, naked or in bondage. This is the new world order Jesus came to establish. This is GOOD NEWS! On this special feast of Christ the King we are being called to bring heaven into the now. We are called to get it right and to be a communal people. We are called to nurture care for the other, versus fueling our tribal divisions that are present in our communities. This is what we are being called too at the end of the liturgical year on the Feast of Christ the King, to grow heaven here, now! And to invite bears to story time at the library, or…..story time at St. Bridget’s!

**Bullet Points for Parents:**

* This is a very important parable of Jesus’. This gospel is on the Feast of Christ the King, the world is presented to the Son of Man returned in a glorified state, signifying the second coming.
* Jesus comes first as an infant, entering with great humility into the human state, validating humanity as good. Jesus, through his death and resurrection moves in the world through his resurrected state. He is present for 40 days, recognized by one’s senses, not by sight. With his Ascension, Jesus ascends into heaven to live in his glorified state. Jesus promised he would not leave us alone, thus sending the Holy Spirit enlivening all of humanity with divinity.
* The fulfillment of this state is the work the disciples of Jesus are missioned to do. This parable points out what the church and world should look like upon Jesus’s return, giving clear directives at the end of Jesus earthly ministry. If you get the outcome, you will get the mission.
* The first clue is how Jesus asks people to be assembled. Jesus does not leave the people before him in subset tribal groups. A very important message to all Christians. “Goats to the left” and “sheep to the right” he says. If this is the way Jesus is going to divide the world we should paying attention. What would a new world order look like based on sheep and goats?
* If we get this, it can change how we function individually and as faith communities. Which is the point of the parable. Jesus doesn’t say, “The Eastern Church on this side, and Western Church on that side. Or from our Western divisions. “The Protestants on this side, Catholics over here. Nor does he divide by country,” Africa over here, Asia over here and the Americas over there”.
* To the first century listener, they knew goats live for themselves, climbing mountains alone in search for food. Goats represent a state of self-centered narcissism. They are foolish. Sheep on the other hand are communal beings. Sheep stick together finding safety as a flock. They are wise. Yet here Jesus is calling sheep to even more, go further. Feed and clothe one another.
* How can our story about Mouse and Bear, goats and sheep in the first century help us to understand a new world order? In our story we meet Bear – a curmudgeon character who lives quite a grumpy and preferably isolated existence. Bear has all he needs, humph! Luckily for Bear he has a very determined and loving friend in the world, mouse.
* Mouse coaxes bear out of his house with a trip to the library, Bear says, “Why should I go to the library, I have seven books that is all I need?” I have enough to feed myself. This is a distinctive character trait of a goat. Bear slowly yields to mouse and is changed through the heart.
* That is what Jesus is asking of his disciples, to learn the way of mouse, to learn how to bring people from hellish lives of isolation and anger, to lives of communal joy, friendship, care and love. We have to be about the other to grow heaven on earth. This is what Jesus is hoping to find upon his return in glory. He leaves it up to us. No one is left behind or goes hungry, naked or in bondage. This is the new world order Jesus came to establish and this is GOOD NEWS!

**Making the Connections for Children:**

1. Do you know any grumpy people?
2. Do you think there might be a good reason that they are that way?
3. How can you help them get more engaged in life?
4. What did mouse do?
5. Did mouse give up on Bear?
6. What was the key to help Bear join the group?
7. How did that transform Bear?
8. When Jesus returns what kind of a world does he want to find?
9. Does he want to see people isolated and just taking care of themselves? Or does he want to see people engage and sharing themselves with each other? How might this be what heaven looks like?
10. How does Jesus say we will be judged? It seems like caring for others who are isolated and in need is really important.
11. How might we act on the words like Jesus and be more like mouse?
12. Do we sometimes act like Bear, what changes might we make?

Question of the Week: How can you work at not growing weary in inviting a bear-like person into fuller participation in your family or community life?

 **Yielding to God Being both sided Empathy**

**Additional Family Activity:** Read this story as a family and talk about what it means and how you might grow more to be a family who grows heaven here on earth.

Long ago an old woman wanted to see for herself the difference between heaven and hell. She went to the monks to ask for their wisdom. They said, “First you shall see hell,” as they put a blindfold over her eyes. When the blindfold was removed the old woman stood at the entrance to a great hall. The hall was filled with round tables each piled high with the most delicious feast – meats, vegetables, fruits of every kind, and desserts to make your mouth water. The old woman noticed that there were people seated just out of arm’s reach of the tables. Their bodies were thin and their pale faces filled with frustration. They held forks almost three feet long. With the forks they could reach the food, but they couldn’t not get the food back into their mouths. As the old woman watched, a hungry, angry sound rose in to the air. “Enough”, she said. “Let me see heaven.”

When the blindfold was removed the second time, the old woman rubbed her eyes. For there she stood again at the entrance to a great hall with tables piled high with the same sumptuous feast. Again she saw the people sitting just out of arm’s reach of the food with those long chopsticks. But the people in heaven were plump and rosy-cheeked, and she watched, the musical sound of laughter filled the air. And then the old woman laughed, for now she understood the difference. The people in heaven were using those three –feet-long chopsticks to feed each other.

**Biblical Background Cycle A**

**The Feast of Christ the King Matt. 25: 31-46**

**Geographical Setting:**

This Parable of Jesus might be one of the last he taught during the final days of his public ministry.  This teaching takes place on the Weds. of Holy Week where Jesus is addressing the crowds and teaching this parable in the shadow of the temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.  Jesus is in Jerusalem in anticipation of the Biblical feast of Passover.  The Temple Mount complex accounts for one tenth of the entire city of Jerusalem.  It was the largest public gathering space in the entire Roman Empire, and remained so for the next two hundred years.

**Terms:**

**“end of time**” - The context of the Parable is the end of time teaching of Jesus.  The entire chapter of Matthew 25 is dedicated to three Parables that address the new and final realities of the end of time, whenever that comes.  Jesus has previously warned the disciples to "stay alert" and to "be alert".  Be on guard, you will not know the day, time or the hour. This is a scene meant to capture the reality of the final judgement; a judgement based on our deeds rather than on our creeds.

**“nations”** - The word "nations" (those who will be assembled before the Lord) always refers to the Gentiles.  The Jewish people were the non-Gentiles. This Parable reveals how the kingdom of God is to grow to be all inclusive. In the end people will be sorted not into the grouping of the world, but the grouping of the kingdom of God.  Those that are isolated and lived for themselves, goats. And those that lived for others, they are caring and communal, like sheep.

 **"the least of my brothers"** refers to disciples who will find themselves persecuted for their faith in Jesus at the end of time.  These believers will be hungry and thirsty, and imprisoned.

"**The righteous**" - all who assist, serve and comfort all who are in need as well those who live within the inclusivity of the kingdom of God open to all. In the world of our Jewish brothers and sisters these men and women are called "righteous Gentiles".  Men and women who do the right thing for those less fortunate than themselves.  They are motivated by a real concern for their common humans no matter where they find them and not matter what condition they find them in.

**Cultural Insights:**

Parables are meant to shock and give the listener pause to consider all meanings behind the story.  Jesus only speaks in Parables to large groups of people.  They listen and have to try and make application of the meaning for themselves.  Each listener is challenged to consider their life of faith as it is expressed in service to others.  If the end comes tomorrow will I be in or will I be left out?  This is a serious and sobering question that demands a careful examination of a life lived for others.  It is never too late to start again, to do the right thing when the opportunity presents itself.

**Insight into Meaning:**

The good deeds recorded in this Parable make up what are called the Corporal Works of Mercy.  That is a fancy theological term for doing good things for people less fortunate than ourselves.  The Church wants to remind us to always be ready to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, etc.. The way of the kingdom is to raise all people’s up. If you can't do it yourself then consider contributions to groups that can.  Support their outreach to reach as many people with the Gospel message of love, care and temporal concern as you can, while you can.

