

## **“Sharing in the Body of Christ”**

**Matthew 25:31-40; Ezekiel 34:11-16**

**“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,  
for this is the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 7:12)**

**This is the Golden Rule and we think of it as a basic standard**

**For Christianity, and a pretty good starting point for**

**Today’s lesson on how to be a sheep and not a goat.**

**And yet the Golden Rule really isn’t a singularly Christian idea.**

**“What is hurtful to yourself do not do to your fellow”**

**Comes from the Talmud- Judaism;**

**“Do unto all men as you would they should unto you and**

**Reject for others what you would reject.” Islam**

**“Treat others as you would treat yourself” Sikism**

**“Hurt not others with that which pains yourself.” Buddhism**

**It turns out that many different faiths, in fact most faiths,**

**Have some version of the Golden Rule.**

**So the thing that makes us different is the radical teachings of Jesus**

**And today’s scripture is such a radical teaching if we take it seriously.**

**In today’s scripture, the Son of Man- Jesus- comes in glory and all**

**nations stand before him- not just one country but all of us.**

**And the King separates us as a shepherd separates sheep & the goats.**

**And measurement of how we're doing is not the Golden Rule.**

**That might be the bare minimum requirement but Jesus**

**Calls for much more.**

***"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, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you welcomed me... Whenever you do this to the least of my brothers and sisters, you have done it to me"***

**So how have you done on this more rigorous calling?**

**I have given you a little report card so that you might grade yourself**

**To find out what side you might end up on- sheep or goats.**

**Take a minute and think about you may have done**

**And what you may not have done.**

**Don't be too terribly hard on yourself.**

**The Biblical folks didn't do very well with the whole list.**

**When Jesus hungry after the temptations, the angels fed him.**

**When he stopped at Mary and Martha's house- Martha fed him;**

**When Jesus was thirsty, the Samaritan woman at the well**

**gave him drink and when he was thirsty on the cross-**

**people took a sponge full of wine and gave it to him.**

**When Jesus was a stranger- Andrew welcomed him and introduced him to Peter; the after the resurrection, the two travelers going to Emmaus welcomed him;**

**When Jesus was naked as a little baby,**

**his Mother Mary wrapped him in swaddling clothes**

**and when he was crucified, Joseph of Arimethia**

**took his naked body and wrapped it in bands of cloth;**

**When Jesus was sick and tired and couldn't carry the cross**

**it was Simeon of Cyrene who came to him**

**and when he was sick and dying on the cross**

**it was his Mother and his friend John who came to him;**

**And when Jesus was in prison for his trial before Pontius Pilate,**

**it was Herod, not Peter who came to visit him.**

**Do you notice anything about this story.**

**Even his own disciples, the ones who were with Jesus in the flesh,**

**Graded out poorly in the six areas of sheep and goathood.**

**Not one of the people did everything we are called to do**

**Not any of his disciples were complete in themselves.**

**It is only when we bind ourselves together as one Body of Christ**

**That we can hope to be the people God calls us to be,**

**If you are like me- I grade out 50-50 in the sheep/goats test.**

**For me, I do well in the feeding hungry people, visiting the sick,**

**And the welcoming the stranger categories.**

**I don't do nearly as well in the drink for the thirsty,**

**clothing the naked and visiting the prisoner categories.**

**So I need all the rest of you sheep and to share in your gifts**

**As I try to be the person God called me to be in Christ.**

**I can't do it alone- It is impossible for me just as it is for you**

**but together we are the Body of Christ and**

**individually members of that Body.**

**So as the church we feed hungry people through our food cupboard,**

**And our Salvation Army, Food for Kids & Kenwood Apartments;**

**we provide drink through our filtration buckets for Peru;**

**we welcome the stranger with our greeters on Sunday morning,**

**our Deacons taking bread to visitors and our receptionist.**

**We are clothing the naked with our shoe drive and coat drive;**

**We care for the sick with pastoral and Stephen ministry visits**

**And Parish nurse outreach;**

**And we help families to visit prisoners in our work with Agape house.**

**We can't do it alone- all that Christ calls us to do and be**

**But when we are together in our giving, and our living out the Gospel  
We can be part of this impossible ministry of caring & compassion  
That the Son of Man, Jesus Christ calls us to.**

**It's like that little gold dollar coin I gave you last week.**

**If anyone tried to buy something with the coin, it doesn't go very far  
but when we pool the gifts that God gives us,**

**then God will multiply those gifts and together**

**we can feed the hungry, provide clean water for the thirsty**

**welcome the stranger, clothe the naked,**

**care for the sick, and visit the prisoner.**

**And what we discover when we do that is not a reward ...**

**But a relationship ...with the rest of the Body of Christ.**

**When I was serving food in the Red Cross shelter that churches**

**In Wichita had built, I decided that I would introduce myself**

**To the people who went through the line:**

**"Hi, my name is Rob, what's your name...Ralph... Well Ralph would**

**You like potatoes with you meatloaf."**

**The whole experience shifted from functional to relational.**

**And it really hit home to me when I introduced myself to one man:**

**"Hi, my names Rob what's yours"..."Jesus" he said (Spanish for Jesus)**

**"Would you like potatoes with your meatloaf, Jesus?"**

**At that moment, I knew that I was sharing in the Body of Christ.**

**Today as we turn in our pledge cards and our time and talent cards**

**We are not just fulfilling an obligation but we are participating**

**The living breathing body of Christ.**