

Blessed To Be A Blessing
Matthew 25:31-46

What does God look like? Who does God resemble? And can you really see the face of God?

The news in the over years has been filled with stories about the appearance of the face of Jesus and the Virgin Mary in some of the oddest places. One person found the face of Jesus on a fish stick. Another declared she had found an image of the Virgin Mary on her decade-old burnt grilled cheese sandwich. Which was auctioned off on Ebay for \$28,000. Searching the Internet, I found photos and stories of appearances in bathroom tile, bathroom stains, potato chips, and even ultrasounds.

So, where do we find the face of Christ? Where do we see the face of Christ the clearest. The passage for this morning explains where we can find the face of Christ. Or, at least, where we ought to be looking.

Notice that it is the attitude of the people toward each other and others unlike them or those in need which determines whether they are sheep or goats. Do you treat everyone you meet like an old goat? Or do you treat them like the sheep of Christ's flock?

We were created in the image of God. From the very beginning of time God has claimed us as God's own. Even when we disobeyed and were rebellious, God sent Christ to find us and bring us back. Through Christ, God made the ultimate sacrifice and paid the ultimate price for our sakes. Through Christ's death on the cross and resurrection from the grave, our sins have been forgiven and we have been given life eternal. Christ promised to be with us always and is made manifest in our lives through the presence of God's Holy Spirit. And if that's not enough, we have been made joint heirs with Christ. We are the children of God, brothers, and sisters with Christ.

We know the Good News. It flows through our soul like blood flows through our body. We breathe it in with every breath we take. We have been blessed beyond measure and we're called to be a blessing for others simply by living like Christ. And by looking at the world and the people of the world through the eyes and heart of Christ. If we can do that, then we will bless those around us and we will see the face of Christ, not in toast or tiles or doughnut holes but in the faces of each other.

We will be enabled to see the face of Christ in our family, friends, and neighbors and even in the faces of strangers.

You should look at your family through the eyes of Christ. Treat each of them as if they were Christ, the honored guest in your home, even if you're in someone else's home. Remember, they might only be family, but they too are a child of God. So, in a quiet moment, when no one is watching you, look at your family through the eyes of Christ, and give thanks. Do the same thing for each of your friends and neighbors. Look at your family, friends and neighbors through the eyes and the heart of Christ and you'll see the face of Christ.

We are also called to look at strangers through the eyes and the heart of Christ. Because you never know when Christ might appear.

There is an Irish legend about a king, who had no children to succeed him on the throne. So, he had his messengers post signs in every town and village of his kingdom inviting qualified young people to apply for an interview with the king. This way the king hoped to be able to choose a successor before he died.

Two qualifications, especially, were stressed. The person must have a deep love for God and a deep love for their neighbor. A young man saw one of the signs. He indeed had a deep love for God and neighbor. He felt a kind of inner voice telling him to apply for an interview.

But the young man was so poor that he didn't have decent clothes to wear to an interview. He also didn't have any money to buy provisions for the long journey to the king's castle.

So, the young man prayed over the matter. He finally decided to beg for the clothes and the provisions he needed. When everything was ready, he set out. After a month of travel, one day the young man caught sight of the king's castle. It sat high on a hill in the distance.

At about the same time, he also caught sight of a poor old beggar sitting by the side of the road. The beggar held out his hands and pleaded for help. "I'm hungry and cold," he said in a weak voice. "Could you give me something warm to wear and something nourishing to eat?"

The sight of the beggar moved the young man. He stripped off his warm outer clothes and exchanged them for the tattered old coat of the beggar. He also gave the beggar most of the provisions he had been carrying in his backpack for the return journey. Then, somewhat uncertain, he walked on to the castle in tattered clothes and without enough food for his return trip.

When the young man arrived at the castle, guards met him at the gate. They took him to the visitors' area. After a long wait, the young man was led into see the king. He bowed low before the throne. When he straightened up, the young man could hardly believe his eyes. He said to the king. "You were the beggar beside the road."

"That's right," said the king. "Why did you do this to me?" asked the young man.

The king said, "I had to find out if you really did love God and neighbor." And then the king told him he had proved himself and was the new heir. What a surprise.

What a surprise. But then what a surprise for every one of the characters in the parable, both the sheep and the goats. They'd met Christ in the face and presence of strangers and didn't even know it.

We meet Christ and can see the face of Christ every day in the face of family, friends, neighbors and especially in the face of strangers. You never know when one of them or all of them will be the Sovereign. So, we're called to treat them all as if they were our Sovereign, Christ. Give thanks that you have been blessed with the Good News that allows you to live like Christ and see Christ in the lives and faces of others. All you really must know, is Christ. All you really must do, is live like Christ and share the blessing.