

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

“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: Amen I say to you what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.”
(Matthew 25: 45)

There are sins of commission. There are sins of omission. There are things we do that are offensive—to God, to another person, or to both. There are things we fail to do—for God, for another person, or for both. Ask yourself: Do you think that more people think of sin as something pretty much that they commit, that they do wrong more than they think of sin as something they failed to do? For me, I think more people experience sin as something they themselves commit that is wrong, immoral, or hurtful of another person or destructive of a relationship. In my own mind that is pretty much how I think too most times.

I do admit that there were moments when I realize I should have been there for another person when I wasn't; there were times when I should have stood up for someone but didn't; there were times when I should have had another's back but looked the other way or remained silent. Those are not good things. They are actually bad things. But they don't feel to us like sins we “committed.”

But in today's gospel passage from the end of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus tells a story about the final judgment. In it the Just Judge, who is the Son of Man, who is the Son of God, who is the Messiah, who is also the Lord, who is also Jesus of Nazareth, enacts judgment. But the basis on which the judgment takes place is not so much in terms of the sins people actively committed. Instead, the final judgment is much more reliant upon our interaction with those around us. All of those around us whether we have a relationship with them or not.

It is clear from the parable that the Lord who will pass judgment on each of us sees us as fundamentally in relationship with each other AND responsible for each other. The Lord who will judge will ask us if we cared about those around us, if we helped those around us, if we visited those around us, if we extended a helping hand. And if we did, we will be welcomed into the Kingdom of God because that is how God is and what God does. On the other hand, if we do not, if we disregard those around us, if we do not care about the people we meet along life's way, then we will be sent out into the darkness in wailing. So, in this week leading to Thanksgiving, are we even truly seeing the people we encounter or pass by. That is the question for this week.