

**Just Do It!**  
**Matthew 25:31-46**  
**Preached by Rev Dr. Harry Cahill**  
**Babcock Presbyterian Church**  
**Sunday, November 23, 2008**

On the last Sunday of the Christian year we celebrate Christ the King. Next Sunday begins the new year and Advent, the season of preparation and waiting for Christ's birth. We'll talk more about the significance of Advent in the weeks ahead but today let's focus on why we begin the new year waiting for his first coming and the end of the year anticipating his second coming.

If you think about it, it makes sense. In the old Communion Service there's a litany

Christ has died  
Christ has risen  
Christ will come again.

Whenever the beloved community makes this faith statement we affirm our hope Christ will return in glory to claim all of creation for his Kingdom. At the Second Coming evil will be vanquished and peace will be restored. "The wolf will lie down with the lamb, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child will lead them." (Isaiah 11:4)

Since the time of the prophet Isaiah in the seventh century B.C., God's people have anxiously waited for the universe to finally be brought back to the perfect harmony of the Garden of Eden before Adam and Eve's fall. But while we wait we still must live in the disharmony of this present age; and but we don't need to participate in it. "Be in the world but not of it" Jesus taught. In other words be faithful to God and don't sell out. Live intentionally as if the Kingdom is already here, and when you do anything to serve the "least of these" Christ's Kingdom will emerge from your selfless act of love.

That's the lesson of the parable of the Judgment of the Nations. To those who intentionally lived out the Sermon on the Mount the king will say, "Come, you that 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 something to drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me; I was naked and you gave me clothing; I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." (Matthew 25:34-36)

Understandably, the faithful will be totally confused. "When did we do any of these things for you?" And the king will answer, "Whatever you did to the least of these by brothers and sisters, you also did it to me." (Matthew 25:40)

Two things jumped out at me about this parable. First, the final judgment will not be based on whether or not you were theologically correct. Instead we'll be asked, "Did you put flesh on Christ's gospel?" not "Were you religious?" or "Did you belong to the right church?" but, "Did you trust God enough to allow yourself to love and serve others?"

Don't confuse this with working your way to heaven. Remember, even the best of the good deed doers are still sinners who need release from the power of sin. So, your

motivation to serve shouldn't be to make brownie points or earn your salvation; you do it because the presence of God in you tells you it's the right thing to do.

Which leads me to the second thing that jumped out at me: the people invited into his Kingdom were surprised to learn Christ was there when they clothed the naked, fed the hungry and took care of the sick because they simply let themselves love spontaneously. They heard that inner voice say, "Just do it," and they did it. What's more if you caught any of these people in the act of doing something for "the least of these," they'd probably be embarrassed; if you complimented them, you make them even more uncomfortable. So when the King tells them their kindness didn't go unnoticed, they were just that: embarrassed and uncomfortable, because their good deeds done in secret were now exposed for everyone to see.

I hope you're wondering, "Can I ever be like that, free to love and serve without needing compliments or reward. Can I become so oblivious to what it takes to serve "the least of these" that doing the right thing becomes an automatic reflex?"

St. Francis of Assisi had the short answer. He taught his followers, "Love God, then do what you like." Love God, then do what you like," or "love God and just do it."

In preparation for this sermon I went looking for stories about ordinary people who were inspired to "just do it." More than anything else, real-life stories have a way of moving us to do the right thing, so here are just a few of those I found:

One story was told by a social worker who worked in a nursing home. Every Christmas a stranger would drop off hundreds of individually wrapped gifts, candy, stationary and stamps, lotions, slippers, sweaters, things the elderly residents could use and enjoy. Obviously this good soul spent the year shopping and wrapping these gifts. "Whatever you do to the least of these, you also do it to me."

Another story was about a mother who got her children to think about people who wouldn't receive any gifts at Christmas. The oldest boy remembered seeing a homeless man begging for money at an intersection so they got some plastic grocery bags and filled them with crackers, candy bars, soap, toothpaste and McDonalds gift certificates, piled it all in their car's trunk and drove around town giving them away to homeless people they saw walking the streets. Over the years it became that family's favorite Christmas tradition. "Whatever you do to the least of these...you also do it to me."

Then there's the story of the teenager with Downs Syndrome who worked at a local supermarket. He was bagging groceries at the checkout counter when he suddenly realized his shoelace was untied and he might trip, but with all the customers and all the groceries he became panicky. The big gruff security guard saw the look on the boy's face so he quietly knelt down and tied his shoe. Just as quickly the boy hugged the guard and said thank you. "Whatever you do...you also do it to me."

How about this one. It's an early Saturday afternoon and a young mother after doing all the shopping, laundry, house cleaning can now relax because her husband took the kids out for the day. As she was putting her feet up, she suddenly remembered an overworked single mother who had a full time job and two small children. She jumped out of her easy chair and drove right to her house and said, "I'm here to help, tell me what needs to be done." "Whatever you do to the least of these, you also do it to me."

And then there's the story of a man at the supermarket standing in the express lane line that just wasn't moving. You know what that's like. Everybody was complaining how incompetent the cashier was when he finally took a long look at her and

saw an overwhelmed lady, doing the best she could dealing with unreasonable customers. After he paid for his groceries, he pulled out the bouquet of flowers he bought for his wife from the bag and said, "Thanks for being so patient." "Whatever you do...you also do it to me."

Here's one that will amaze you. A couple of neighbors were talking about a small house on their block, owned by an elderly widow that slowly fell into disrepair since her husband died. They got the neighbors together, painted her house and relandscaped her lawn. "Whatever you do...you do it to me."

My final story: an alcoholic was arrested and jailed, again, for drunk driving. This time his wife refused to bail him out. A man in the neighborhood after hearing of the situation went to the jail. The prisoner was embarrassed and ashamed when he saw the man who lived just two doors down the street sitting across from him. The visitor spoke. "I'm here because I was arrested for drunk driving five years ago and because of Alcoholics Anonymous I've been sober ever since. A neighbor came looking for me so I'm here to do the same for you. If you want to talk about what's going on in your life, I'm all ears." "Whatever you do for the least of these, you also do it to me."

I hope these stories give you some ideas and inspire you to "just do it." But remember why you do it. It's not just to feel good about yourself, or even because you care deeply for people. Once when a reporter saw Mother Teresa cleaning up a stinking, dying man just found in the gutter he said to her, "Mother you must really love people." She quickly corrected him. "If I did this because I love people, I'd have quit years ago. I can only do this because I love Jesus."

Next week we officially begin waiting for the coming of our King, who risked everything to make love possible. He's coming again, so open your eyes and be ready to just do it to the least of his brothers and sisters because you're also doing it to him.