

“Love in Action” – Pr Jim Sprengle
The Last Sunday of the Church Year – November 26, 2023

- I. **Matthew 25:40** – “And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you did it to Me.’”
- II. **Jesus saves in more ways than one.**
 - a. In a story from People Magazine, a young man named Tyler Moon signed up for a 10-mile race, he decided to witness about Jesus.
 - i. Instead of putting his name on his bib, he printed the words “Jesus Saves” to encourage others to think about Jesus.
 - ii. The story takes a scary turn though, because 8 miles in, the otherwise healthy 25-year-old collapsed.
 1. He had a heart attack... as his heart stopped pumping blood for roughly 10 seconds after an irregular heartbeat.
 2. It should be noted that the odds of surviving an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest are very low.
 3. But fortunately, Moon had another runner right behind him who could help... a registered nurse.
 4. So, when Moon collapsed, he immediately assessed the situation and started CPR while several other runners jumped in to help until the paramedics arrived.
 - iii. Here is the irony of the story though... the nurse who helped to save Tyler Moon’s life was named Jesus... or a Latino man named Jesús.
 1. Moon was interviewed on the Today show and said, “The fact that God placed all these wonderful, incredible human beings right behind me; it’s amazing to think of them and what they’ve done for me. I hope that people are encouraged to take that CPR class, to help a stranger, to help someone in need. That’s the big message I really want to get across.”¹
 - b. A story like this reminds us that God gives us multiple ways to witness His love to the world, but there are times when we need to be hands on.
 - i. I don’t want to say that one way is better than another, but we often default to whatever is most comfortable to us.
 - ii. Sometimes we show the love of Jesus with a bumper sticker, a t-shirt or hat, or in the case of Tyler Moon, a racer’s bib.
 - iii. Sometimes we show the love of Jesus through our words of invitation and witnessing the truth of the Gospel.
 1. We might share His name in telling the Good News, or invite someone to church or Bible study to hear about it.
 - iv. Other times we show the love of Jesus through our action in the world – as we step into the physical and emotional needs of people.
 1. Jesus does save, but He involves regular people like you and me... and sometimes in very literal ways.

2. We bear His name to the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, and imprisoned by how we treat them.

- III. **The end times are near**, just as they were when Jesus spoke these words.
- a. You might wonder how that works, because we haven't seen the return of the King in over 2000 years – but hear the words of Peter...
 - i. “⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.” (2 Peter 3:8-10)
 - ii. The Lord will return, but just as we might be impatient for that day, He is patient in order that all people may come to faith in Him... that those who might be separated for eternity have every chance to hear and believe!
 - b. This final day of our Church year reminds us again that Jesus is coming back, and as Christians, what we do in the world can have eternal results.
- IV. **Jesus shares a vision of the end of all things in our reading today.**
- a. Sometimes this is reduced to a simple, “the sheep and the goats” ... but in a great and final judgment, Jesus Christ the King of kings will separate believers from unbelievers.
 - i. And as we know from Scripture, “the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,” (John 5:22) and that Jesus will “be judge of the living and the dead,” (Acts 10:42).
 - ii. The goal for Jesus our Savior is that all people are saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:3-4)
 - iii. Yet, there will be many who harden their hearts and reject the only hope for an eternity with God... they will receive the penalty for sin – the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) – and not just physical death, but an eternal death separated from God forever.
 - b. So, Jesus addresses the great throng of people before Him on that Last Day... giving us some insight into the ways believers and unbelievers live in obedience to God during their lifetimes.
 - i. It's important to remember that God does not base our salvation on good deeds! –
 1. So if you are thinking about doing nice things for people to get over on Jesus' “right” side... sorry, but it's all about the work of Jesus and what He already did.
 - ii. The love that God so freely gave to us on the cross is now in each of us though faith and pours out into the people around us.

1. We obey our Savior when He tells us to love God and love our neighbors.
2. We live for Jesus when we make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching as He commands us to.

V. **Jesus says that believers practice love in action without even knowing.**

- a. The trouble is we might look at our actions and wonder if we are doing enough – and certainly, it’s good to think about how we are doing when it comes to stepping into the needs of others.
- b. It might be helpful to look at one word in the reading that could easily be overlooked... “brothers”. (vs 40)...”as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you did it to Me.”
 - i. Jesus says earlier in Matthew 12, “For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.” (Mt. 12:50)
 - ii. We can take from the words of the King that our love in action is more than coming across complete strangers and loving them, but also within the fellowship of believers...
 - iii. A natural extension of our faith life in Christian community is to share our love – in both word and deed.
 - iv. This is not to say that we don’t look for ways to love strangers and be the presence of Christ in the world, but as Jesus points out, we might *overlook* the many ways we already love others.
- c. The Church is really a beautiful place of lifting up and supporting all in need... you might be able to think of many ways you’ve been supported.
 - i. Not only that, but you may never know how you are supporting others in their time of need.
- d. It’s fitting that our Human Care Board has a group of people called “Love in Action” – because when different needs arise, we try to meet them if possible...
 - i. We certainly don’t have a large group, and you are always welcome to be added to the list of helpers – but the idea is to support the needs of people inside, and sometimes outside, our church.
- e. The truth is that Jesus uses us to show love in tangible ways to people in the world, and it all starts because of the love He showed first.
 - i. Love is a verb, and that means it’s more than an emotion – it comes out in the things we do.
 - ii. There was no greater love shown than Jesus going to the cross to save us from an eternity without Him... He loved us first (1Jn 4:19)
 - iii. For each of us who now have this gift of faith, we have Christ in us, directing and leading us to love and serve others.
- f. One day, the King of kings will return in glory, and He will state the facts of our life in Him... that we practiced love in action because of our faith.
- g. Yet we will learn the most important thing by far was that He practiced love in action first. Amen.

¹ Source: Helen Murphy, “Man Wearing ‘Jesus Saves’ Bib Collapses During Race, Is Given CPR by a Man Named Jesus.” People (10-30-19)