

I'm going to ask you a series of questions that I want you to be completely honest about. I'm obviously not asking for you to answer out loud, but it is important that you are truthful to yourself. BTW, although no one else will hear your answer, know that God does know your answer.

Take a moment to think about a time in the past week where God may have visited you, may have given you the opportunity to feed the hungry, clothe the naked or care for the sick. How did you respond to that opportunity? Was it someone at work? Someone on the street or in a store? For you kids out there...was it in school? Was it someone you didn't know...or someone that is a friend or family member? Was it someone in this very parish or someone from a completely different faith? God said right here in the reading from Matthew that he is the least of those that we see every day. Notice in this reading, on the judgement day when all of the nations are before him and he judges them, it isn't necessarily all about the sins that we committed that we all talk about...lying, stealing, coveting or murdering...it's about what we did or didn't do for others. He's fairly clear about giving mercy to the merciful and not so much to those that show no mercy. It is repeated over and over...what we do for the least.

If you are like me, you often pray to strengthen those areas where you feel you are weak. For me, I pray for patience and the softening of my heart towards those that most frustrate me. I noticed for the longest time that it seemed like God was not answering my prayers, I was getting as frustrated and impatient as often, if not more often, than I did before I prayed for this help. Then my spiritual advisor pointed out to me that God is not going to necessarily miraculously give me what I pray for, He is going to give me opportunities to work on those areas that I pray about.

God is giving us all opportunities each day to make sure we are lined up on his right side rather than his left, that we are considered sheep instead of goats. Are we fully acting out of the love that Jesus showed us...for the least of us? We need to recognize those times and make sure that we are responding in a way that shows not only our love for God, but also our love for the least of society. We all need to make sure that all of us, myself and Father John included, go out this week and actively recognize those times that we are being challenged to care for the least of us. It may not be in the form of clothing or feeding the needy or caring for the sick. It may be that person who is having a hard time in work, or difficulty in a relationship. We can always see and have the opportunity to help those begging for help on the street, but we should also recognize those who are begging for help among our own friends and families, as well as those strangers we see every day. Do something that moves you farther towards lining up on the right side of Jesus, and keep in mind that as long as we're working out of mercy and love, we'll find ourselves solidly in that right line. Go out, do something that you'll remember fondly the next time you are asked to remember how you responded to a time Jesus visited you. Work out of mercy...work out of love...and when you lose focus on what's important, remember the words of the Apostle Paul:

If I speak in human and angelic tongues* but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails. So faith, hope, love remain, these.

Deacon Corey Compton,

November 25-26, 2017

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe