**Title:** “Have courage, and be kind” (Matt. 25:31-46) – The Parable of the Sheep & Goats

**Introduction:** Cinderella is one of the most enduring stories of all time. The Greek geographer Strabo recorded the earliest written version around 7 BC. His story is about a Greek slave girl who marries the king of Egypt.[[1]](#endnote-1) Another version originated in China during the 9th century. The girl’s name is Yeh-Shen, a magical fish helps her, and the shoe is golden not glass.[[2]](#endnote-2) Charles Perrault published the most popular version in 1697. He added the fairy godmother, the pumpkin carriage, the animal servants and the glass slipper.[[3]](#endnote-3) The names, characters, and setting change from place to place and time to time, but the overall story remains the same. A young girl endures unjust oppression from her family members. Through a magical set of circumstances, she escapes her negative situation and lives a new, good life. There is one other consistent factor throughout the different modern versions. Despite her circumstance, Cinderella is kind.

In a recent (2015) movie version of the story, an absent mother helps to guide Cinderella’s future. Before the mother’s death, she instilled these words in Cinderella’s heart: *“Have courage, and be kind.”* Fear leads us to protect ourselves and retaliate against our enemies. Courage leads us to be kind.

Kindness is fading from modern society. Road rage incidents involving guns are increasing at an annual rate of 7%.[[4]](#endnote-4) People are expressing their views with anger instead of discussion. It’s easier and sometimes safer just to keep to yourself. As Christians, we don’t have that option.

Jesus calls us to love our enemies and even be kind to them. That’s hard to do. We don’t always get to see positive results to kindness. Kindness is rarely rewarded at least in time for us to see it. Cinderella stories are a fairy tale – just a made up story.

We come to another of Jesus’ stories today. Guess what it’s about: kindness.

Unlike the other two sections of Matthew 25, Jesus does not specifically say this section is a parable. Two facts would suggest that it is. It is preceded by two parables making it wise to treat this section the same way. Secondly, Jesus uses symbolic language – “sheep” and “goats” – to describe the people under consideration. This is normal practice for Jesus when He is telling parables. Don’t let the possibility that this is a parable lessen the reality or the seriousness of Jesus’ content. Jesus is referencing an actual future event that will have eternal consequences.

1. **This is *when* it will happen – coming of Jesus** (Matt. 25:31)

What “coming” of Jesus is this? Jesus has already used the phrase “coming of the Son of Man” multiple times throughout the Olivet Discourse. When He uses it here, He could be referring to the Rapture before the Tribulation, the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation or something else. To help us understand, Jesus gives three identifiers of His coming.

1. He will be seen. *“in His glory”*

This “coming” will be glorious. That gives us a clue which coming Jesus is referencing. The rapture has its own glory because that is when Jesus comes to receive His Bride. That will be a glorious day! Jesus will transform our bodies, eradicate our sin natures, and keep us with Him for the rest of eternity! Though the world will see the effects of this coming, they will not see Jesus. His return will be in the clouds. Their opinion of Him will not be positively affected by the Rapture. Seven years later, however, Jesus will part the clouds and come all the way to earth. It is then that “every eye will see Him” (Rev. 1:7) and give Him the glory He deserves as the victorious King (Phil. 2:10-11). The coming at the end of the Tribulation will bring the most glory to the “Son of Man.”

The phrase “Son of Man” appears multiple times (Matt. 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44) throughout Jesus’ original message to His disciples, but we have not explained it yet. The Old Testament writers used the phrase repeatedly. In its first occurrence, it magnifies the qualitative difference between God and man (Num. 23:19). He is *not* like us! Most of the uses point to the smallness and weakness of humanity.

*“What is man that you take thought of him and the son of man that you care for him?”* (Psalm 8:4)

God used it of Ezekiel over 90 times to remind him of the connection he had with his audience. “You are one of them.” Daniel uses it twice (Dan. 7:13; 8:17).

The first time Daniel uses “Son of man,” it has prophetic significance. Daniel sees a vision of “One like a Son of Man” coming with the clouds of heaven. This Son of Man is *not* weak, and He does *not* fade away as quickly as the grass (Is. 51:12). This Son of Man will rule all the nations (Dan. 7:14).

Jesus identifies Himself as the “Son of Man.” Based on the number of times Jesus used the phrase, it was His favorite title. It points to His connection with humanity. “I am one of you.” Because Jesus became one of us (Phil. 2:7), he feels our hurts and our struggles. He presently takes those struggles to our Father in a High-Priestly role (Heb. 4:15). The title “Son of Man” then communicates that Jesus is like us (“I feel your pain”) but not like us (“I can heal your pain”).

The future arrival of Jesus will not be the first time that His feet touch earth’s dust. He is God who became a man, a commoner, but rose to assume the throne once again. He will rule in glory with His Father.

1. He will be accompanied. *“angels with Him”*

He has been here before. His past presence though was not a glorious one. Beginning with His birth in a Bethlehem stable, He faced a myriad of humiliations. He was first known as the son of Mary not the son of Joseph. The Pharisees propagated the idea that He was an illegitimate child – conceived by a union between Mary and someone other than Joseph. Though there were times His glory shone through – His miracles, the Mount of Transfiguration, the affirmations of His Father – He spent the majority of His life in obscurity. He was weak, experiencing all the normal human limitations of weariness, hunger, and sorrow. In the end, He was tortured and executed, surrounded by common criminals.

Angels served Him throughout His life. They announced His birth to both Mary and Joseph. At two crisis points in His life, the temptation in the wilderness and the Garden of Gethsemane, angels came and ministered to Him (Matt. 4:11; Luke 22:43). I tend to think that the angels didn’t much enjoy seeing Jesus this way.

If angels can get confused, Jesus’ life on earth would have been the ultimate source for it. “Why doesn’t He show His glory?” “Why is He allowing them to do this to Him?” “Why don’t they understand who He is?” Maybe there were even times the Father had to prevent the angels from pouring out *their* wrath on humanity.

There are three occurrences the angels would have enjoyed. The first was their encounter with the shepherds in the field as they cried out, “Glory to God in the highest” (Luke 2:14). For a moment, the skies shone with the glory Jesus deserved. The other two were at the conclusion of Jesus’ earthly ministry. They announced His resurrection (Luke 24:4-7) and His return (Acts 1:10-11). His humiliation was finally over. None of those compare to the enjoyment they will one day have when they return with Him to usher in His exaltation as He claims His rightful place as King (1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 19:14).

1. He will be enthroned. *“sit on His glorious throne”*

I mentioned Daniel 7:14 a moment ago. Let’s take a look at it now.

*“And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away. And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.”*

With the arrival of the Tribulation’s conclusion, Jesus will set up His perfect 1000 year kingdom. Jesus taught His disciples to pray for the arrival of this Kingdom and its mentality. He recognized this prayer would not be answered until rebellion had been put down (Matt. 6:10). His accusers used Jesus’ Kingdom teaching against Him (Matt. 26:64), and His disciples wanted it to come in their lifetime (Acts 1:6). For now, we have to wait. It will come. Jesus *will* sit on the throne.

As King, Jesus has two responsibilities toward his domain: protection and provision. By the end of the Tribulation, Jesus will have evidenced His ability and willingness to do both for His children even during the most horrendous time in human history. The consistent promise in Jesus’ letters to the churches of Revelation, some of whom were going through tremendous suffering, was His protection and provision. Jesus is a powerful King. Jesus is also a good King. But that doesn’t mean He will allow just anyone into His kingdom.

1. **This is *what* will happen – consequences of actions** (Matt. 25:32-34, 41)
2. There will be a separation. *“gathered…He will separate”*

Imagine this scene. You are in a large group of people. Someone escorts the group into a room and divides the group into two smaller groups for reasons unknown to you. You don’t know if this division is a good thing or a bad thing. It’s like being in a lane on the highway or in the grocery store. You constantly watch the other group to find out if you need to switch. Eventually, there is a point of no return. However things turn out for your group is how they will turn out for you. By the time of Jesus’ return, there will be no opportunity to change lanes.

Before there is a separation, there is a gathering. You could think of it like a sporting event. You have to see who wants to play before you can divide into teams. So Jesus gathers the “nations” together. The difference here is the “nations” decided long before this event which team they were playing for. That’s no longer in question. They’re wearing the jerseys. One jersey says “goats,” and the other says “sheep.” What is in question is what Jesus means by “nations” and why He calls them by the non-complimentary designations that He does.

When people of our century read the word “nations,” we think of political entities, ruled by a government and divided from other “nations” by geographical barriers. How we define “nations” is important.

If we define “nations” as “countries,” then two things happen. One, we have to have another judgment ceremony beside the two we already know. Two, part of my judgment and yours will be determined simply by our birth in a particular country – something over which we had no control. There is some of the country/region idea in the word Jesus uses (Acts 1:8), but it is simpler than that. It’s the same word Jesus uses in Matthew 28:19 when He tells His current disciples to make disciples of all “nations.” It means groups of people or just people in general. Unlike what often happens today, you won’t be judged by where you lived, the language you spoke, the color of your skin, or the shape of your face. Jesus, the King, knows what it is like to endure unjust judgment. His judgment won’t be easy, but it will be just.

1. There will be an evaluation. *“the King will say…”*

We all know that judgment is eventually coming. We can try to postpone it, ignore it, or wish it away, but deep inside we know it is coming. This is evaluation day. Jesus will evaluate His followers at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Great White Throne Judgment will be the moment of evaluation for those who have rejected Jesus. Both of these events may be in view. The nature of prophecy is that it will sometimes describe two events and leave out the intervening time. The result is that the two events appear to be one.

Talking about judgment often raises questions and objections. “Why does there even have to be a judgment?” I will answer that by asking a question of my own.

Are you pleased there is someone who comes to your favorite restaurant to evaluate the way they handle the food that will enter your body? Are you glad that someone evaluates airplane engines, bridges, and prescription drugs? Evaluation maintains high standards. It keeps us safe. Not just anyone can judge a restaurant (although everyone tries to). Inspectors have to have special qualifications.

So what qualifies Jesus to be your judge? He is your Creator. He is your Sustainer. And whether you claim Him as such or not, He is your God. What if I don’t like Jesus’ judgment? Is there a higher court? Jesus is the King! He wrote the laws, and He will enforce them. As the King, he has the right to invite whomever he wants to come and spend time in his kingdom.

1. There will be an invitation. *“Come…”*

What is the normal criterion a king uses to determine whom he will invite? He usually invites people He likes – people that are like Him because of blood (family) or because of their similar personality or nature. That creates a problem. We are not like God (Is. 55:8-9). He opens the invitation to us anyway.

*“The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.”* (Revelation 22:17)

The reason people don’t make it into the Kingdom is not that Jesus is stingy. Jesus is generous with His invitation. It’s just that He has requirements.

In one of the other Kingdom parables Jesus told, He illustrated both ideas. When people the king invited to his son’s wedding refused to come, the king extended the invitation to anyone who would come. Even so, he required that they have on appropriate attire. He threw out those who were “underdressed” (Matt. 22:12-13). The invitation is open to all, but only those who choose to become part of the family of God (John 3:3) through the blood of Jesus will gain entrance into the Kingdom.

1. There will be a condemnation. *“Depart…”*

Jesus doesn’t arbitrarily refuse people entrance. Neither does He refuse entrance because of a lack of space. The home Jesus is preparing for His followers (John 14:1-3) is known as the New Jerusalem. John describes it as a spacious, beautiful city that will be over 1000 miles wide, deep, and high (Rev. 21:16). That means over one billion people could each have a cubic mile all to themselves! Talk about breathing room. Besides, Jesus knows what it feels like to be sent away due to a lack of room (Luke 2:7). Jesus uses different reasoning than this.

The only ones He turns away are those who have turned Him away. It’s not that He’s being spiteful or seeking revenge; it’s that no one can gain entrance without having Jesus escort them in. He is the ticket. He is the key (Rev. 1:18; 3:7). He is the door (John 14:6). Just as was true in the days of Noah, there comes the point at which God revokes the invitation to escape judgment, and the door is shut (Gen. 7:16).

Sending people away is the *last* thing Jesus wants (2 Pet. 3:9-10). He would far rather show mercy than pass out judgment.

The fact is you *want* Jesus as your Judge. Judges are supposed to be impartial, but He is not. He loves you. It’s like having your grandma as your judge! He *wants* you to pass the test. Unlike grandma who often ignores our faulty actions, Jesus is required by His own character to be just. He cannot excuse sin, so He has done everything possible to provide forgiveness for it. But if you will not accept the payment He has provided, then you will experience His harsh judgment.

1. **This is *who* it will happen to – compassion of people** (Matt. 25:35-36, 42-43)
2. They are described in unusual terms. *“sheep and goats” “right and…left”*

Jesus begins His judgment with what appears to be some trash talk, some name calling – “sheep” and “goats.” That seems immature and unbefitting a King. So why does He call them “sheep” and “goats?” Couldn’t He just as easily have called them elephants and donkeys? (right and left, conservatives and liberals) Jesus chose His descriptions carefully.

Sheep and goats have a very similar genetic code. They probably had a common ancestor or “kind” (Gen. 1:25). The Hebrew word that describes the animals Abel cared for could be used to speak of either sheep or goats (Gen. 4:2, 4).[[5]](#endnote-5) Both of them were often in the same flock and cared for by the same shepherd. “In North America, sheep and goats are easily distinguishable, due to specialization through breeding. … However, throughout history, and still today in parts of Asia and Africa, sheep and goats are almost identical, and no one but a shepherd can easily tell the difference.”[[6]](#endnote-6) You probably have difficulty believing that last statement, so let me show you a picture and ask you to tell me whether you are looking at a sheep or a goat. [show picture] If you labeled that picture as a goat, you would be wrong.

Most of the time when we see these animals, we have the context clue of their body covering to help us be able to identify them. But when you just see one portion of them, their heads, it becomes more difficult. Are you starting to see why Jesus chose these descriptors to designate those who would be a part of His Kingdom and those who would not? Right now, it can be hard to identify false God-followers (Matt. 13:24-30). If you only see their face – the part they put forward in public – they look like part of the flock. But Jesus knows His sheep (John 10:1-5), and they follow Him.

Another way to distinguish between the two animals is by their behavior. Sheep are grazers eating off the ground and maintaining a very specific diet (Ps. 1:2). Goats are browsers choosing to eat leaves, shrubs and anything else that might be in sight (2 Tim. 4:3). Do you remember the last time you were in a petting zoo that had goats? Any loose clothing became the goats’ afternoon snack. Because sheep eat low to the ground, increasing their exposure to parasites, they developed a resistance to those parasites.[[7]](#endnote-7) Keeping the head down (submission, worship) maintains health.

Sheep follow their shepherd. Goats are led by other goats if they follow anything at all. “Goats…have a reputation for being independent, opinionated and curious at best – or vulgar, dangerous and destructive at worst. Shepherds protect sheep from their environment, whereas [goat herders] protect the environment from their goats.”[[8]](#endnote-8) Both animals can put off a foul odor when they are not clean, but the goat has a repugnant smell that comes from its very nature – the inside.[[9]](#endnote-9) The only ways to get rid of it are to mask it or for the goat to transform into a sheep.

*“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”* (2 Cor. 5:17)

Even our idioms suggest a negative view of goats. To “separate the sheep from the goats” (also “men from the boys”) means to separate the superior from the inferior.[[10]](#endnote-10) To “get someone’s goat” means to irritate them.[[11]](#endnote-11) Goats mixed in with sheep in churches create problems for the pastor (they are hard to lead) and a bad smell in the community. No wonder Jesus has to separate them.

Jesus says that he puts the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. What’s the significance? Maybe nothing. Being human, Jesus only had two hands. On the other hand (pun intended), Jesus might be saying something more significant. Know this first. Jesus was *not* making a political statement! The designations of “left” and “right” didn’t designate liberal and conservative, Democrat and Republican until long after Jesus was back in heaven.

“The left hand has long been associated with deviance. The word ‘sinister’ originally meant ‘to the left’ in Latin. The word ‘left’ comes from the Old English word ‘lyft,’ which literally meant ‘weak, foolish.’”[[12]](#endnote-12) No offense to those of you who are left-handed, but in the Bible, the right hand was the place of favor, faithfulness, and dependability. The name Benjamin means “son of my right hand.” One of Jacob’s last actions was to bless Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Joseph was agitated when Jacob placed his right hand on Ephraim, the younger, making him superior to his older brother, Manasseh (Gen. 48:17-20). When Stephen was dying, he looked up into heaven and saw Jesus standing at the Father’s right hand (Acts 7:56). The right hand is the place of honor. The left hand is what’s “left” if the place of honor is already occupied.

The reason Jesus honored the sheep instead of the goats is because of the sheep’s compassionate service.

1. They act in unusual ways. *“you gave”*

In Jesus assessment of the sheep, He says they gave. They gave food, water, shelter, clothing, comfort, and company meeting physical, emotional and financial needs. It is unusual to give. It is normal for us to either ignore needs and therefore do nothing to help meet them (like the goats), or simply to take. This is especially true when we do not see any personal benefit to giving or when we are hurting.

At the beginning of this message, I introduced you to the recent retelling of the Cinderella story. A pivotal scene in the movie is when Cinderella meets her fairy godmother. Cinderella is heart-broken because of the constant cruel treatment from her step-family culminating in their refusal to allow her to attend the ball. As the tears are rolling down her face, an old beggar woman asks her for a crust of bread and a cup of milk. Cinderella could have filled a cup with her tears, but instead of nursing her own wounds, she manages a slight smile and hurries off to fill the request. They both agree that a bowl of milk is nothing, but the godmother says that “kindness makes it everything.” It is hard for hurting people to help. When they do, they show they are like Jesus.

Jesus did and does what He affirms in others. He provided food for 5000+ people (John 6) and quenched the thirst of the woman at the well (John 4). Jesus invited Zaccheus (Luke 19) and Levi (Mark 2:14) into His company even though the general populace ostracized them. He took away the shame of the half-naked woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8), healed countless people of their frailties, and ministered to John the Baptist while he was in prison (Matt. 11). Now He calls us to continue His work.

There are a variety of needs and a variety of ways to meet those needs. We can provide food and clean water where it is lacking. We can welcome the “stranger” by opening our hearts and maybe our homes to the immigrant, the foster care child, and the unwed mother. We can provide protection for the vulnerable, the ashamed, and those who are open to attack. Some of these needs are going to require long-term help and personal risk. Truly sick people don’t get well quickly. Caring for them is a commitment. In the process, you might contract their sickness.

Meeting needs also requires setting aside pre-conceived ideas about how they got themselves into the mess. You don’t know if they deserve their circumstances or your assistance (“prison”). Don’t judge; just help. Not everyone who is seeking help – from the government or you – is trying to take advantage. Leave the judging to Jesus.

It’s easy to excuse ourselves for not meeting needs in someone else’s life. The only excuse that the “goats” use is that they weren’t aware. For me, the greater limiting factor is my awareness of *so many* needs that I don’t feel like my small contribution can make a difference. Others complain they don’t know how to help, they’re too busy to help, or they just don’t want to get involved. Doing so might require a commitment bigger than they want to give. Maybe their situation is their fault. If I rescue them, they won’t learn their lesson. *Imagine Jesus using these reasons for why He chose not to meet a need in our lives!* Behind all the reasons are two issues: selfishness and a lack of faith. Yes, there is a right way to meet needs. Exercise wisdom while you exercise generosity. But don’t allow your uncertainty about *how* to act prevent you from acting.

Still, there is the question. If I meet their need, how do I know that there will still be enough for me (1 Kings 17:12-14)? Resources *are* limited.

It is here that I must remind you the context of Jesus’ story. The context is the end times, likely the Tribulation. They will be waiting anxiously for Jesus’ return.

How do people get when they have to wait? They get grumpy, rude and pushy. While we’re waiting for Jesus’ return, be kind. What will life be like for Jews and Christians and all those who refuse the Mark of the Beast? They will not be able to own a business or be employed which prevents them from earning money. Even if they have money, they will not be able to buy groceries, gas, medicine or shelter (Rev. 13:17). It will be almost impossible for them to meet their family's basic needs. God provides the Jews with miraculous protection from the Antichrist's attacks, but there is still the issue of provisions. Those that saw difficult days on the horizon would likely have planned and stockpiled resources. But the resources would be limited. Sharing them might mean they would not last until the end of the Tribulation. A survivalist instinct takes over.

I can envision apocalyptic movies where people are trying to break into bomb shelters to get protection and food only to be met by a half-crazed shotgun-holding land owner aimed at protecting his provisions from any invader. Thankfully, there will be some who, though they have limited resources will exhibit they have unlimited kindness.

Though this story’s primary context is the Tribulation, we don’t have to wait until then to be kind. The more we exercise kindness now, the more people will come into the Kingdom and be spared the horrors of the Tribulation!

At the end of it all, the selfish, judgmental, stingy, self-righteous people will be sent to spend eternity with people who are just like them. That truly will be hell. That leaves us with the sheep. What kind of people will inhabit the Kingdom? Loving, compassionate, selfless, giving. What will it be like to spend eternity surrounded by people who are like that? Heaven. Why would the King invite these people into his presence? They are like him (1 John 3:2).

1. **This is *why* it will happen – confirmation of character** (Matt. 25:37-40; 44-46)
2. Their character is righteous. *“the righteous” (vs. 37, 46)*

The combined teaching of the three parables in Matthew 25 leaves us with a problem. What is the criterion that determines whether or not people get to enter the Kingdom? The virgins got in because they prepared. The servants got in because they successfully invested. The sheep got in because they were kind. The apparent teaching is that salvation is based on works. C.S. Lewis, the great theologian, struggled with finding the correlation between the teaching of salvation by grace through faith and the apparent teaching of salvation by works here.[[13]](#endnote-13)

Jesus solves the problem with one simple word. He refers to the sheep as “righteous” (vs. 37, 46). Their actions don’t get them entrance. Their actions just show their true nature. They’re not declared righteous because of their kind actions. Their kind actions manifest their righteous character. That’s why they get to enter the Kingdom, and that the only reason that any of us will get in.

What do your actions toward the needy say about you?

*“Pure religion and undefiled is to visit widows and orphans in their time of need and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”* (James 1:27)

What does it say about me if I see a need, I have the resources to meet that need, and I do nothing? John would question the presence of God’s love inside of me (1 John 3:16-18; Gal. 5:22-23). James would question the vitality of my faith (James 2:14-17). Can we rightly claim to be righteous Kingdom citizens if we don’t do right actions? Right actions have consequences for those we serve and for us.

1. Their actions are offerings. *“you did it to me” (vs. 40)*

Have you ever been in a situation where after the fact, you realized your actions were far more consequential than you could have possibly imagined? At that point, you were either very relieved or very nervous.

The televisions shows, “*What would you do?*” and “*Undercover Boss*” illustrate this concept. The first show puts actors in controversial social situations and then records the often startling reaction of people around them. The second show moves company CEO’s from the corporate office to the assembly line. Since most people in the company do not know the face of the CEO, they respond to this person as they would any other and use the same work habits as normal. Once the people find out the true nature of their situation, they react with embarrassment, relief, joy, or anger. They either blew it, or they got it right.

How would you respond to people in need if you knew that by doing so, you were serving Jesus? What if we realized that service was an act of worship? In Jesus’ story, the sheep did not recognize that Jesus was taking their actions personally. They did them anyway which gives further evidence of their righteous character. The fact that Jesus takes the help personally also implies that He takes the hurt personally. Jesus identifies with us in our needs and feels them right along with us. Jesus both felt needs – hunger, thirst, weariness, loneliness – and met those needs in the lives of others. Our needs are his needs. Our hurts are his hurts. The sheep didn’t know they were going to get a reward for their actions. Doing the actions and seeing how it helped was blessing enough (“blessed” in vs. 34).

Jesus’ reaction makes a lot of sense. When someone treats my wife or children well, I have a positive attitude toward them even if I don’t know them. On the other hand, I take it as a personal offense when someone hurts or harms them in any way. What the sheep did may have been very small (“whatever”), they served those who had no means of repaying them (“least of these”), and they had no personal attachment to those they served (“my brothers”).[[14]](#endnote-14) And yet their reward was great. Though the ones they served could not repay them, the big Brother of those they served certainly could! Think about it. Who benefited more – those who were trying to protect themselves or those who were willing to take a risk?

*“The one who saves his life will lose it, but the one who gives his life for my sake will find it.”* (Matthew 10:39)

As positive as this message is, the negative is also true. Not serving others is not serving Jesus.

Let me ask you some questions. What is something you are presently doing to meet needs? If you could do it, what would you *like* to do? What presently is keeping you from it? What could you adjust in your schedule or budget to be able to meet those needs?

**Conclusion:** The story of the sheep and the goats has direct application to future end-time events. But you don’t need to wait until then to begin practicing kindness. It’s never too early to be kind. And it’s not too late.

You are establishing the patterns of your life and the example for your children right now. Do they see you practicing kindness? Jesus’ coming may be around the corner, or it might not be for millennia. You or your descendants are going to experience these events. What are you doing right now to leave a legacy for them to follow, an example for their education? It may be something as costly and complex as planning and executing a mission trip to an underdeveloped country. It may be donating money to help people recover from a natural disaster. Or it may be as simple and cheap as telling them a story that illustrates the benefits of kindness – a story like Cinderella.

Cinderella had a time limit. At 12:00 midnight, she ceased being a princess. But because her nature was the type that led her to be consistently kind toward those who were different from her (the animals) and even those who were cruel to her (her step-family), she was ushered into the Kingdom. Her kindness was dependent on her character not her status. And because her character won out, her status changed. Sound familiar?

Though Cinderella is a fairy tale, her message is still true. “Have courage, and be kind.”

1. *Zipes, Jack* (2001). The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola and Basile to the Brothers Grimm. W. W. Norton & Co. p. 444. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.readyed.com.au/Sites/extra/cinhist.htm [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. http://www.readyed.com.au/Sites/extra/cinhist.htm [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/study-road-rage-incidents-involving-guns-are-increasing/ [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. https://creation.com/separating-the-sheep-from-the-goats [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. https://www.ucg.org/beyond-today/blogs/what-is-the-difference-between-sheep-and-goats [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. http://www.petmd.com/blogs/thedailyvet/aobrien/2013/sept/goats-are-from-mars-sheep-are-from-venus-30886# [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. https://www.ucg.org/beyond-today/blogs/what-is-the-difference-between-sheep-and-goats [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. http://www.watchmanbiblestudy.com/Articles/SymbologyofSheepGoats.html [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. The American Heritage® Dictionary of Idioms by Christine Ammer. Copyright © 2003, 1997 by The Christine Ammer 1992 Trust. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Many racehorses develop a strong attachment to their stable mascots—dogs, cats, chickens, and, especially, goats. The mascots provide a calming effect— they're the horse's security blankets. One will live in or close to “its” horse's stall and will accompany the horse to racetracks across the country. Horses become very upset when their mascots aren't around, so crafty stable hands would steal away a rival horse's pal. Thus deprived, the horse would become angry when someone got its goat. - Endangered Phrases by Steven D. Price Copyright © 2011 by Steven D. Price http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/goat [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. http://www.dictionary.com/e/leftright/ [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. “I take it as a first principle that we must not interpret any part of scripture so that it contradicts other parts, and specially we must not use an apostle’s teaching to contradict our Lord’s. Whatever St. Paul may have meant, we must not reject the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats. There, you see there is nothing…about Faith – all depends on works. But how this is to be reconciled with St. Paul’s teaching, or with other sayings of Our Lord, I frankly confess I don’t know…the real relationship between God’s omnipotence and man’s freedom is something we can’t find out.” – *Letters of C. S. Lewis, p. 432, to Mrs. Emily McLay* [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Some interpret “brothers” here as the nation of Israel. The interpretation then would be that Jesus is rewarding those countries or individuals who were a friend to Israel. There is definitely a blessing that is promised to those who bless Israel and a curse for her enemies (Gen. 12:1-3). But Jesus took the concept of “brothers” farther than just those who were blood-related to Him. When Jesus confronted Paul on the road to Damascus, He said, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (Acts 9:4) His “brothers” were the Church. Granted, the Church was composed primarily of Jews at the time. In another passage, Mary and Jesus’ physical brothers were trying to get His attention. When Jesus was told that His mother and brothers were outside, He said, “Anyone who does the will of my Father is my brother…” (Matt. 12:48-50) By so doing, He placed His disciples on a higher level than His physical brothers. Israel would be included in “brothers”, but “brothers” is not limited to Israel. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)