



One Page Sermon

By Pastor Robb McCoy

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The final judgment

Recap of Sermon from 3/26/23 by Robb McCoy
Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

Go to any bar or barbershop. Tune into a sports-talk radio station or ESPN. Get on twitter or comment on Facebook, and you'll find a place to argue about one thing: Who is the GOAT? Tom Brady or John Elway? Michael Jordan or LeBron James? Babe Ruth or Willie Mays? I remember when it was considered a bad thing to be a goat.

I remember when *Sports Illustrated* used to produce a column each week called "Heroes and Goats," and the goats were the ones who messed up. They were the ones who struck out with the game on the line or committed a bad penalty. No one wanted to be a goat. Now everyone wants to be the GOAT. For some, GOAT is even a verb. To be "goated" is synonymous with being "crowned." As in, after that win, he was goated. Why? Because language is funny. Language shifts, and now it is understood that GOAT is an acronym for Greatest Of All Time.

Yet in this passage the goat is still what I remember what it used to mean – the one who failed. Jesus separates the sheep and the goats, and it's the goats who are the 'losers.' The goats are the ones who ignored the needs of others, who were apathetic, isolated, and alone. The goats are the ones who end in an eternity of separation. It's funny how language has evolved to change goat to GOAT.

Jesus actually had a lot to say about this kind of reversal, and if we are to fully understand this difficult story about the final judgment of the Son of Man, we need to see it in the context of this great reversal. This is that last bit of teaching that Jesus does before the passion begins. He tells people that the final judgment is based on feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger, and visiting the prisoner. Jesus' first teaching however, wasn't all that different. It was in the Sermon on the Mount, when he announced that the hungry in spirit, thirsty for righteousness, meek, and mourning were all "Blessed" or "Happy" or "Honored."

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, he explained what the Kingdom of Heaven was all about – it was this strange state of be-

ing where all those the world thought were wretched were actually wonderful. It was the strange kingdom where those who were marginalized were actually valued. He told the people in his Sermon on the Mount that the hurting, broken hearted, and despised would be healed, restored, and lifted up. The reversal began in the Sermon on the Mount and culminated here in today's passage.

Eternal life comes to those who see the people on the margins, and treats them as if they are in community. The actions described in this judgment story are how the beatitudes are carried out. This, Jesus last teaching before his passion, is a reminder to his followers about what their role is. They will find meaning, joy, and eternal life by making sure that the Beatitudes are enacted. When they choose to isolation, apathy, and neglect, they are choosing a life of separation. Living a life without service to others, without seeing the humanity, hunger, or beauty in other people is a hellish existence. When people instead choose to see the needs of others and respond, they are choose eternal life.

Everything that Jesus said and did between the Beatitudes and the Sheep and the Goats was about building the community. It was about establishing the Kingdom of Heaven as an alternative to the kind of empire that Rome had created and Religious authorities prospered from. Judgment in Rome's kingdom favored domination, status, violence, and exploitation. Judgment in the Son of Man's kingdom valued caring for one another, sharing resources, and building community. To live in the Kingdom is to first declare the Blessings on those who were de-valued, and then live out that declaration. Jesus didn't establish orthodoxy, reinforce the status quo, or support an institution hell-bent on marginalizing others.

Jesus was the ultimate GOAT – the Greatest Of All Time. And his greatness was in the service he provided, the healing he performed, the bread that he broke, the barriers that he crossed, the love that he shared, and in the suffering he endured. Jesus was the GOAT to show us how to be sheep. He was the GOAT to inspire and empower us all to kindness, generosity, and love that is eternal.