

You Have Done It Unto Me

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes that our treatment of the needy reflects our faith in Christ and will be pivotal on Judgment Day.

Scripture: Matthew 25:31

Topics: "Faith in Action", "Service to Others"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the profound message of Jesus regarding the final judgment, where acts of kindness towards the needy are equated with service to Christ himself. He challenges the notion that faith alone determines salvation, suggesting that genuine faith manifests through compassionate actions. The sermon illustrates how neglecting the least among us can lead to dire consequences, as those who fail to help the needy will face judgment. Miller encourages believers to recognize Christ in every act of service, reminding them that their treatment of others reflects their love for Him. Ultimately, the message calls for a life of active love and service, as these are the true indicators of faith.

Transcript

Those certainly seem to be strange words, which our Lord says he will speak on the judgment-day to the multitudes before him. We are taught elsewhere, that faith in Christ is the vital thing in determining one's eternity--yet Christ himself, in portraying the judgment, says not a word about believing on him or confessing him. Those who are welcomed to the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world--are those who have fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, covered the shivering and cold, visited the sick and cared for the prisoner. Are we, then, to reverse our cherished evangelical belief that men are saved by faith, and not by works? May we not say that the good deeds here described, are the fruit of grace in the heart? We are not saved by our own ministries of love; but if we are saved--these are the acts we will perform.

Our Lord's words show us the kind of Christian life we should live in this world. We say we love Christ, and he tells us that we must show our affection for him in kindnesses to his friends. Then he goes farther and puts himself before us, to be served and helped as if personally in every needy and suffering one who comes to us. "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him--and He will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who 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 something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you took care of Me; I was in prison and you visited Me.' "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or without clothes and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison--and visit You?' "And the King will answer them, 'I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you have done it unto Me.'

Then He will also say to those on the left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels! For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in; I was naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not take care of Me.' "Then they too will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison--and not help You?' "Then He will answer them, 'I assure you: Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me.'

"And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." Matthew 25:31-46

There is something inexpressibly beautiful in the revelation which these words of our Lord bring to our hearts. Christ himself is ever standing before us, appealing to us for love, for sympathy, for ministry. How all human lives about us are transfigured by this word, which tells us that in the lowliest Christian, Jesus himself waits! No wonder this sweet truth has wrought itself into numberless legends beautiful telling how abject forms, when served in the Master's name in time of need, suddenly changed into radiant loveliness, revealing themselves as Jesus the glorious One.

A popular author has written a tender little story, showing how these opportunities for serving Christ fill the plain, common days of the lowliest life.

A poor shoemaker whose heart God had touched, dreamt one night, that someone called him by name. As he listened he heard also these words: "Look tomorrow on the street. I am coming!" He did not know the meaning of his unusual dream--yet his heart was strangely warm all the day. He wrought in his little shop and watched the people as they went by. By and by came an old soldier with a shovel, and began to clear away the snow from the sidewalk. The shoemaker saw him, and observed, at length, that the soldier was very weary. Going to the door, he invited him to come in and have some warm tea. The exhausted man gratefully accepted the invitation, and, greatly refreshed by the kindness, at length went on his way.

Later a woman in poor garb and carrying a child stopped before the window. Both mother and child were thinly clad, and the child was crying. Again the shoemaker opened his door, called to the woman and bade her come into his shop, where it was warm. The astonished mother obeyed, and, sitting by the stove, told her story of hunger and need. Soon the old man brought food for her and her child, sending them forth warmed and fed, and with some money to provide for further need.

Next it was an old apple-woman who drew the shoemaker's attention. A rude boy was annoying her. Again the kind-hearted man went out of his shop and acted as peacemaker and friend.

Thus the day passed. At his work, the shoemaker remembered continually the vision of the night before, and watched all the hours for the appearing of him who had promised to come. He saw no bright presence--but a number of poor people whom he helped and comforted.

Night came, and the shoemaker took down his New Testament to read. Again he seemed to hear someone stepping behind him, and there was a voice in his ear: "Did you not recognize me?" "Who?" asked the old man." "Me," repeated the voice. "It is I;" and the old soldier he had fed and warmed stepped from the shadows, smiled and vanished. "And this is I," said the voice again, while from the darkness the woman and her child appeared, smiled and vanished. "And this is I," again spoke the voice, and the poor apple-woman stepped forward, beamed a kindly look and passed out of sight.

The old shoemaker put on his glasses and began to read where his New Testament chanced to open. At the top of the page he read: "For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you took care of Me." Then a little farther down he read again: "I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you have done it unto Me."

"Then he understood," says the little book, "that his dream did not deceive him--that the Savior really called on him that day, and that he really received him."

The other side of this truth we must also notice: "Then He will also say to those on the left--Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels! For I was hungry--and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty--and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger--and you did not take Me in; I was naked--and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison--and you did not take care of Me." The Lord Jesus is always standing before us and always coming up to us--in his poor and needy ones. And what if we pay no heed to him? What if we coldly turn him away?

There is another legend which illustrates this side of the lesson. Once an angel whispered to a good woman in the morning, that her Lord was coming to her house that day. She made ready for him with loving care, and eagerly watched all day for his coming. At twilight a poor little child came to her door and begged shelter for the night--but the woman was thinking so much of her Lord that she only gave the child a little money and sent him on into the gathering darkness. But as he turned away--the child grew fair and beautiful, and as he vanished in a flood of glory, the good woman heard the words, "Behold your Lord!" He had come, had not been recognized, had been treated coldly--and had passed beyond recall, vanishing as he revealed himself.

The lesson is intensely practical; it touches all our common daily life. If we neglect one of Christ's little ones--we shall hear on judgment day, "I was hungry--and you gave me no bread. I was shivering in the cold--and you clothed me not. I was a homeless stranger at your door--and you showed me no pity." It seems a little thing, to treat with neglect, or even with unkindness, some needy one. We cannot see how it matters to us, what claim the person has on us, why we need turn aside from our own way, to do anything for him.

This picture of the final judgment helps us to see why it does matter, that the person really has a claim on us, that it is indeed the same as if it were Jesus himself who was in need.

It must be noticed that it will be the things men have failed to do which shall turn the scales on the great trial-day. We must meet in judgment, our neglects as well as our sinful acts; our sins of omission, as well

as our sins of commission. Those who are sent into the eternal fire, are not described as great sinners. They have not been cruel, inhuman or unjust. They are not charged with having wronged or injured one of Christ's little ones. Only neglects are in the indictment. They have seen little ones hungry--and have not fed them; thirsty--and have not given them the cup of cold water; shivering in the cold--and have not clothed them; sick--and have not visited them. They have merely "passed by on the other side" when they have seen human need in their way which they might have relieved, or sorrow which they might have comforted.

We need to walk reverently and thoughtfully through life, not jostling roughly against the lowest person we meet, not looking coldly on the poorest that comes to our doors, lest in the judgment we may find that we have neglected to show kindness to our blessed Lord.

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