

## ***Introduction to Week #2***

Last week, we asked the question about telling good from evil: What does it look like? We identified what a wolf in sheep's clothing may look like. But what is the final sorting that God does? The way the Bible describes it is not based on what "it" looks like, but what "it" does and says. In response to this, What Now, week 2 is: what does it do and what does it say?

This may be where we find the good news, but it will take struggling with some realities.

We begin with our introduction entitled *The Sorting*.

### ***The Sorting***

I remembered when I was in elementary school, and the PE teacher chose two captains, who would then choose their teams. I hated the idea that I might not be selected early – or even at all.

In the Harry Potter stories, the sorting hat was put on the head of entering students, discerned their thoughts, and assigned them to a house that best fit their personalities. Sometimes the choices were not obvious to the hat, yet it then went to the hearts of the students and selected from there.

Matthew 25 frightened me because I knew of plenty of times I missed helping, visiting, supporting, or providing shelter for others. When I combined this with the harvest message of sorting the wheat from the chaff or finding the plants entangled in the thorns, I realized that salvation was impossible for most of us sinners. Fear of God and judgment set in because I knew I fell short in so many ways.

When people fear, they respond through fight, flight, freeze, or fawn. When looking at my sin and less than stellar choices, I have done all of these. Then I remembered messages from Jonah, Isaiah, John, and Jesus. REPENT. Turn to God. Forgive. Show Mercy. Keep the Faith, and most of all keep going in love for God, Neighbor, and Creation.

Through Jesus, I need not fear; therefore, I need not fight, flee, freeze or fawn. I need to face the truth about me that is within me, and no one knows that (even though they may think they do) except me.

When I focused on my constant and weighing shortcomings and weaknesses, I found St. Paul's story of the thorns. He prayed and prayed for God to remove them, and God's answer was not what he wanted it to be, yet it was the one that freed him to move forward: "My grace is sufficient unto you," God told St. Paul.

## What Now? Week #2

Jesus doesn't lose his sheep, even when they wander. He seeks them out and guides them. When they go astray and wander aimlessly, all they need to do is stop and repent. This gives their good shepherd time to find them and answer them with redemption. There is always redemption.

God's grace is sufficient. Remain in prayer, focused in faith, and God will work His will through each person and community. To do this, we use this special Lenten time to examine our lives, hearts, and souls without fear, knowing that God will redeem us when we do this. Yet, our egos may interfere with justifications and excuses. This is when we ask God to re-align us to His will for our lives.

I took a look at our divided world, realizing that the divisions have not moved any closer together. The people in our world and communities are already aligning themselves based on the messages they wanted to hear and people who said these messages. They are looking for a savior and believe they have found one in certain leaders or politicians who have become godlike in their eyes. "Idolatry!" I thought.

I realized that many individuals have become part of a collectivity within groups, accepting the groups' mantras and speaking the same languages and code phrases. "I wonder if God will do the same that he did with the Tower of Babel," I thought to myself.

Then I looked the actions, words, and platforms of the opposite extremes, and compared each with Jesus's words in Matthew 25. Much of these were about rights of groups or individuals, not what did the groups stand for in helping EVERY person succeed and creating a HEALTHY world for ALL. Some platforms were closer than others.

It became more muddied until I looked at what each one wanted to do for the poor, the sick, the prisoner. It became crystal clear. The people separated themselves. The thorns were there, but the chaff or goats or sheep gravitated to one side or the other. Suddenly, the chaff/goats and wheat/sheep were in neat rows following the widening divide.

**Reflection:** Put yourself in Matthew 25. Where are you?

**Response:** Read the pieces and self-examination. Do another Reflection.

**Prayer:** God, I am so sorry. I repent for \_\_\_\_\_. Please forgive me. Help me to do \_\_\_\_\_ instead. Help me to follow the teachings of Christ with the heart, mind, and soul of love. In Jesus' name. Amen.