

A Pastor was giving the children a message during Sunday school. On this particular Sunday the Pastor decided to use squirrels for the lesson about determination and preparation. He started out by saying, "I'm going to describe something and I want you to raise hand when you know what it is. It lives in trees and eats nuts (pause) no hands went up. The pastor went on, and its gray and has a bushy tail, (pause), no hands raised, the pastor continued: it jumps from branch to branch and chatters and flips its tail when it gets excited, (pause). Finally, one little boy tentatively raised his hand, the pastor breathed a sigh of relief and called on him. Well the boy said, I know the answer must be Jesus but its sure sounds like a squirrel to me.

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him.

And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his 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 food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

In today's Gospel Jesus says that He can be found in others. Christ identifies Himself with you and me and when we reach out and meet the needs of another human being, we are doing it to the Lord.

A young man name Tom, decided that he wanted to begin to find God in his life. He began his search by going to a monastery and requested to speak to the eldest and wisest Monk. After a short period of time an older monk appeared and sat down to speak with him. The young man asks, "How does one find enlightenment"? The Monk replied, "reach out with kindness to those around you." Since he did not like the answer he asked, "How does one get close to God"? The elderly monk said, "Open your heart and welcome those you meet along the way." Tom walked away frustrated and disappointed because he was looking for something more profound, something more spiritual, not so concrete.

In the story, the wise Monk was trying to get Tom to understand how to become a sheep. Jesus tells us in the end the sheep and the goats will be separated according to how they treated other human beings. Like Jesus commanded us “Love one another as I have loved you.” In the parable both the sheep and the goats fail to understand why they were sheep and why they are goats. Both groups could not see that Christ could be found in others and how they were treating their brothers and sisters is how they were treating Christ Himself. The sheep and the goats were looking for a God in the sky and they fail to see the Christ living among them.

St. Francis of Assisi knew what it meant to be a sheep. He said, “I do not so much love humanity, for loving humanity is too abstract, I love the next person I meet, then the next person and then the next person.”

There was a famous monastery which had fallen on hard times. Formerly its many buildings were filled with young monks and its big church resounded with joyful singing of the chant. However, as time went by, people no longer came to the famous monastery like they used to. The monks themselves shuffled through the cloisters and praised their God with heavy hearts.

On the edge of the monastery woods, an old wise Pastor had built a little hut. He would come there from time to time to fast and pray. No one ever spoke with him, but whenever he appeared, the word would be passed from monk to monk, “The wise Pastor walks in the woods.” And for as long as the Pastor was there, the monks would feel sustained by his prayerful presence.

One day the abbot decided to visit the wise old Pastor. So, after morning Mass, he set out through the woods. As he approached the hut, the abbot saw the Pastor standing in the doorway, his arms out stretched in welcome. The two embraced like long lost brothers. The Pastor motioned the abbot to enter. After a time of silence with each other, the Pastor said, "You and your brothers Monks are serving God with heavy hearts. You have come to ask a message from me. I will give you this message, but you can only repeat it once. After that, no one must say it aloud again." The Pastor looked straight at the abbot and said, "The messiah, the Christ is among you." For a while, all was silent, and then the Abbot returned to the Monastery.

The next morning, the abbot called his monks together. He told them he had received a message from the wise old Pastor and that this message could only be given once and never again to be spoken aloud. Then he looked at each of the monks and said, "The wise Pastor said that the Messiah, the Christ, lives among us."

The monks were startled by this. "What could it mean?" "Is Brother John the messiah? Or Father Matthew? Or Brother Tom? What could this mean? As time went by the monks began to treat one another with a very special reverence. There was a gentle, wholehearted, human quality about them now, which was hard to describe but easy to notice. They live with one another as people that who had discover something new, "Christ lives among them." Before long, people were coming from far and wide to be nourished by their love and by their prayer presence.

The message that the wise Pastor passed on to the Monks which change them, is the same message Jesus gave us today in the Gospel. **“Treat one another and love one another as if you were treating and loving Christ Himself.”**

Are there people you having a difficulty loving? they too are among the least of your brothers and sisters. Can you think of some way of changing the way you see them? How can you better see the Christ in them?

Let us pray: please pray after me: Lord Jesus, I desire to be among the sheep. Give me the grace to see you in others, especially those who don't see things the way I do. Amen and Amen.

May God bless you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. May God bless you and keep you, may God's face shine upon you and be gracious to you always. May Mary our Mother, hold you in her loving arms. Have a blessed Thanksgiving.