

## Ye Have Done It unto Me

By Tami Jelinek

Matthew 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Is Jesus talking merely about physical food and clothing here when he says, "I was hungry, and you gave Me meat...naked and you clothed Me?" What does Christ, and by extension "his body," need of physical food and clothing? Certainly there is physical application, and we should not minimize the importance of caring for the physical needs of others. In fact we may be reminded of James' words:

James 2:15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

While we do well to view this statement from James as an admonishment to "put your money where your mouth is" and step out and *physically* care for people's needs, even this passage is about more than that, as it is using physical food and clothing to illustrate that invisible inward faith is evidenced and demonstrated by visible outward actions. And those outward actions of genuine faith should go far beyond "feeding" and "clothing" people physically. In fact I often wonder if Christians sometimes use a passage like this to check things off their religious "to do" list. Again, we should not diminish the significance of meeting the physical needs of others; but we must realize we are to be about so much more.

So returning to Matthew 25, is Jesus *really* talking just about physical food, drink and clothing? The context here is about those who would *inherit the kingdom*; and "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Romans 14:17) Jesus is saying in this passage that "those on his right" were displaying the characteristics of the kingdom they would inherit; and that it was those outwardly visible characteristics which marked them as such. They showed the mercy to others which they had been shown in Christ; thereby manifesting they were truly His sheep. The reciprocal, intimate nature of Jesus' relationship with the ones the Father had given Him is expressed by His statement, "ye have done it unto Me."

Let us look at a couple of these actions to which Jesus refers as characteristics of those who would inherit the kingdom, beyond a mere surface and literalistic understanding; and show how they do indeed display the true character of the

Kingdom of God, the New Heavens and Earth of which the prophets spoke, and which we know is a present reality for those of us who have inherited eternal life in Jesus Christ. Since we have been made in His image, we live that out by displaying who we are in Him to each other. But He was the first. We love only because He first loved us, and we love Him back by loving each other. We are indeed His body, wherefore He says, "ye have done it unto Me." So as we consider these applications, we should keep in mind both the *reciprocity* and *intimacy* of our communion first with the Lord; then secondarily and by extension, with each other. The two cannot be separated, as one flows from and finds its source in the other. "Freely ye have received, freely give." (Matthew 10:8)

### **"I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat"**

Matthew 4:4 [Jesus said] It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Here we see that the Word of God is our life source. As physical food is to the body, the Word of God is to the spirit.

John 6:53 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. 54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. 56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. 58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

Matthew 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Compare this kingdom promise of Jesus with these heavenly visions of the prophets:

Ezekiel 34:23 And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd...29 And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land...

Isaiah 49:9...They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. 10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

Psalms 132:15 I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.

How is this feeding of Christ reciprocated? I wonder if these words from Jesus' kingdom parable, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee?" occurred to Peter when Jesus said to him, "Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep." He was really saying, "You love Me when you care for my people. In fact, ye have done it unto Me."

How do we "feed" each other with God's Word? It is simply by knowing it, and making it known.

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

I used to hear passages like this and view them as rather esoteric and indefinable in practical terms; and the artificial picture I would get of people walking around talking to each other in sing-songy King James English didn't help. But if we have experienced being fed from the Source, if we truly know that His words are *life*, those words should naturally flow out to those we are living that life *with*. Of course apart from intentionally engaging in community with others this isn't going to naturally happen, which is why we must not separate our communion with God from our commitment to God's people.

### **"I was a stranger, and ye took me in"**

My mind immediately goes to Peter again. He certainly had no idea when he first heard these words, how they would play out in his own life a short time later. I tend to think he remembered them when he took the gospel to Cornelius. This stranger he previously viewed as "unclean" God had cleansed, and granted eternal life. In touching one he had considered untouchable, Peter took in one of Jesus' own brethren, and fulfilled the words of the Lord, "ye have done it unto Me."

Ephesians 2:11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ... that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. 19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God...

The prophets spoke of the uniting of Jew and Gentile into one household in conjunction with Israel's salvation and eternal inheritance of the land:

Isaiah 14:1 For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and

set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.

Isaiah 49:5 And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. 6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Isaiah 11:10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

We manifest the character of the kingdom of God when we take in strangers. We love because He first loved us. To know mercy is to show mercy. It should not be overlooked that Jesus Himself had intimate knowledge of what it meant to be a "stranger":

Psalm 69:8 I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children.

When we contemplate what our Lord and Savior endured for us, including alienation from His own Father, it gives new depth of meaning to His statement, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

In closing, here is a passage from Isaiah which serves to summarize several characteristics of the kingdom to which Jesus refers in the Matthew 25 parable:

Isaiah 58:6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? 7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?... And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday.

Notice especially in the above passage the phrase, "thine own flesh." In Christ, in Heaven, we are in Him, He is in us, and we are intimately connected as members of His body.

"Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?  
38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?  
39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

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