

Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Look

One of the narratives that we hear in our culture is that everyone should be able to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps.

1. What narrative were you taught by your family about homeless people and people who are less fortunate than you are?
2. How did your family talk about people who are imprisoned? Was there any conversation about discrimination and injustice in our legal system?
3. How did these narratives shape the way that you think about and interact with people who are poor or are in prison?

Book Matthew 25:31–46

According to Jesus in this passage, the only criteria for eternal salvation is our ability to see the face of Jesus in every person we meet, especially in the “least of these.”

1. How is Jesus’ description of our responsibility to care for the poor counter to our cultural narrative of every person being able to take care of themselves and “pull themselves up by their own bootstraps”?
2. How do you feel about Jesus’ challenge to us to care for others? Does it make you uncomfortable? Angry? Do you feel full of empathy?
3. Do you agree with the assertion that the only criteria for salvation is how we cared for those around us?

Took

The story of the sheep and the goats that Jesus tells in the gospel today isn’t a prediction of the future, but rather a warning to change our heart and our behavior. It is easy to wander through life taking care of ourselves and our own families and ignoring those who are in need around us.

1. How do you currently interact with homeless people when you encounter them on the street or outside of a store? How does it make you feel when you see them?
2. Have you ever spent time caring for people in the prison system? Why or why not?
3. What might you be able to do differently in response to Jesus’ call to care for the least of those among us?