

ENCOUNTERS: IN 'THE LEAST OF THESE'

I. CHECK-IN

- Check in. How is everyone doing? Did you practice Lectio Divina this week?

II. SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 25:31-46

31 “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. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ 37 Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? 38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? 39 And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ 40 And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.’ 41 Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You who are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, 42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ 44 Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not take care of you?’ 45 Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life.”

V. PRAYER REQUESTS

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with each other. As the small group leader, we ask that you do two things:

1. write them down
2. ask someone to pray

IV. THINK ABOUT

How often are you in the presence of those Jesus calls “the least of these”? Is your life designed to *avoid* the challenge and discomfort of being with the hurting and needy, or do you do things to intentionally be in their presence?

III. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What stands out to you in the scripture?
- Where is God encountered in this story?
- Explain God’s “preference for the poor.”
- How can you participate in the Corporal Works of Mercy listed on the back of this page?

See the next page for additional questions, figures, and scriptures.

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The Corporal Works of Mercy

FEED THE HUNGRY

- 1 So many people in our world do not have enough food. Ways we can help include not wasting food, donating food to food banks, cooking or serving for a soup kitchen, or donating money.



GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY

- 2 Being thirsty is not just about wanting a drink. It is also about having clean water that you can drink and use for cooking and cleaning. We can help by not wasting water in our homes, donating money to a clean water project, and carrying water bottles in our car to give to homeless people.



CLOTHE THE NAKED

- 3 Many people around us don't have adequate clothing; offering them something to wear is a simple but powerful act of compassion. Take a moment to clean out your closet and donate any extra clothes to a thrift store. Instead of buying something new online, consider donating to a women's shelter or a local charity. Do you know someone who struggles to feel accepted? "Clothe" them with dignity by showing them they're truly welcome and loved.



SHELTER THE HOMELESS

- 4 Many people live on the streets or in their cars instead of a home. We can donate supplies to homeless shelters like pillows, sheets, and blankets; cleaning supplies; and food.



VISIT THE SICK

- 5 It is never fun to be sick, even with a cold, is it? We can take time to be kind to those who are sick by visiting them, calling them, or sending a card or gift. This lets them know we are thinking of them so they will be less lonely.



VISIT THE PRISONERS

- 6 Even though someone is in prison, they are still a person to treat with respect. Not everyone can go to prison to visit, but we can pray for them and donate things to the prison.



BURY THE DEAD

- 7 No one really likes to think about death, especially of the people we love. If we know someone who has had a death in their family, it is nice to tell them that we are sorry the person has died. You can send a card to let them know you are praying for them.



This month we are collecting food for the community fridges on Government Street. They are in need of pre-made or frozen meals; shelf-stable meals like hearty soups, red beans, spaghetti, tuna, etc.; fresh fruits and veggies, bottled water and sports drinks; peanut butter; cooking oil; dog and cat food; toiletries and period products. You can bring these items to our October 6 Large Group Gathering!

"We've got to find ways to get closer to the poor, the neglected, the abused, the excluded, the marginalized. It's in proximity to these communities that we will hear things we will not otherwise hear, see things that we will not otherwise see. There is power when we get proximate."

- BRYAN STEVENSON

"Jesus comes to us in the distressing disguise of the poor."

- MOTHER THERESA