

WHAT'S REQUIRED OF US (MT 25:31-46)
Sermon given by the Rev. Corinne Hodges
Sunday, Nov. 23, 2008, St. John of the Cross, Bristol

- I. Story of helping a stranger on a street corner in Chicago
 - A. Out of the corner of my eye, saw him throw his bag against the building wall, sit down defeated, discouraged, obvious he could use some help
 - B. Turned back and listened to his story
 - C. Walked him to train station, showed him the correct line and wished him well
 - D. So what is the big deal...you helped a stranger? Something easy, not miraculous
 - E. Precisely. That's the point!

- II. Today's Gospel we hear straight from Jesus some surprising news...when it comes to judgment day, what will be counted are the little things we did
 - A. Not the profession of our faith
 - B. Not the asking of forgiveness
 - C. Not even whether or not we attended church
 - D. What is required is our response to everyday, common human need
 - E. Did we feed those who were hungry, give drink to the thirsty, help the homeless, welcome the stranger, visit the sick and imprisoned
 - F. Basically, how did we treat God's people
 - G. Jesus tells us that the **ONLY** thing that matters is how we respond to basic human need

- III. Now this will be good news for some, not for others
 - A. The one thing about living so close to a big city is that you can't help but hear, see and know about human need. It is all around you.
 - B. Perhaps when we live more spread out we do not come face to face with the fact that others need us...but others do need our help
 - C. If we do not think this is true, we are mistaken
 - D. Hae and Burt Kaczemarek of Burt's Quality Appliance in Osceola gave out 1,000 turkeys, one lady's response
 - E. Returned back from vacation to eight phone calls, all requesting help this holiday season: food, clothing, a warm coat, a good pair of shoes, anything
 - F. Christmas baskets are an opportunity to help—purchasing five pounds of butter, four cans of spaghetti sauce, a bag of potatoes for someone else
 - G. These are not miraculous things, but they are the important ones...the ones that make a difference in someone else's life

- IV. This season of Thanksgiving, God asks us to search our hearts
 - A. Think about the neediest person you know
 - B. Who do you know who is hungry, thirsty, lonely, or ill?
 - C. Might be a relative, a friend, a parishioner
 - D. It might be a stranger, someone whose face you remember, whose feet you saw in the middle of winter in shoes without socks, whose hands did not have gloves. Someone you last saw shivering in the cold
 - E. Don't pity that person...ask them how you can help
 - F. If you know of no one in need, choose a name on the Christmas tree in the parish hall or sign up to help fill a Christmas basket
 - G. Remember that choosing not to do anything, to look the other way and ignore people or opportunities to help, is also a response
 - H. When we neglect people, we neglect the Lord

- V. Finally, you will notice today I am wearing white—today we celebrate Christ the King
 - A. Christ as the ultimate judge—not us
 - B. It's an important reminder
 - C. When we see others in need, we are not to judge who deserves help and who does not
 - D. Friends who have a bakery—many requests and gives something to everyone
 - E. We are to give out of our abundance, out of love and mercy
 - F. As members of the body of Christ, we share ourselves with our brothers and sisters, all of God's family, from whatever God has given us, to the best of our ability
 - G. And by showing that we care, we show that God cares
 - H. May we be Christ's presence to others
 - I. This, I believe, is what God wants