

Here Comes the Judge!

A Children's Sermon

by Mark McClintock

text: Matthew 25:31-46

Author's Note: This is one of the two-character sermons that I have used with my ventriloquism puppet, Sidney. It can easily be done as a dialogue between two people or with any sort of puppet. Remember—adaptation is one of God's creative gifts to us! When the dialogue begins, Sidney is wearing a robe.

MARK: Hi, Sidney. Are you joining the choir today?

SIDNEY: Nope. I was watching Judge Judy this week and decided that's what I'd like to be when I grow up. A judge. So I gotta get started practicing.

MARK: I see. And why do you want to be a judge?

SIDNEY: I really like the way judges decide who's innocent and who's guilty. And I like the way they make people look really foolish. I think I'm kinda good at that already.

MARK: At making people look foolish?

SIDNEY: Sure, I've been practicing on you for years. 'Course, most people aren't as easy to make look foolish as you are. So I gotta work on it some more.

MARK: Well, it's very interesting that you want to be a judge, Sidney, because our Gospel lesson this morning describes the way Jesus will judge everyone who has ever lived. He calls it separating the sheep from the goats.

SIDNEY: Who ever heard of a judge for sheep and goats?

MARK: It's just a sort of picture, Sidney. People who do what God has created us to do are like the sheep. People who don't are like the goats. You know the difference between sheep and goats, don't you?

SIDNEY: 'Course, I do. Sheep don't have horns to hit you with.

MARK: Yes, but—

SIDNEY: There's no butts about it!

MARK: I was going to say that some sheep in some parts of the world do have horns. But horns are not what God looks for in us humans.

SIDNEY: So what does God look for?

MARK: Sheep know that they depend on their shepherd, and they follow the shepherd wherever he leads them.

SIDNEY: I don't have to eat grass, do I?

MARK: No, but you do need to follow Jesus' example and do the things Jesus did.

SIDNEY: Like turn water into wine?

MARK: No, like taking care of people's needs. In Matthew 25, Jesus says, "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, I was naked and you gave me clothing—"

SIDNEY: Thank goodness you did that!

MARK: “—I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.”

SIDNEY: What did I do THAT for, Jesus?

MARK: That’s what the people in the story asked. Jesus replied, “Whenever you did it for one of the least of these, you did it for me, too.”

SIDNEY: Oh, I get it. You’re supposed to give food to someone who’s hungry and something to drink to someone who’s thirsty?

MARK: Exactly.

SIDNEY: Aha! I told you I wanted an extra doughnut this morning, and you didn’t give me one, did you?

MARK: No, I didn’t, but—

SIDNEY: Guilty! And when I asked for a Coca Cola with breakfast, did you get me one?

MARK: Of course not, I—

SIDNEY: Guilty again! And don’t forget that Bart Simpson T-shirt I asked you for at the store the other day. You didn’t buy it for me, right?

MARK: No—

SIDNEY: Guilty, guilty, and double guilty! You goat, you.

MARK: Sidney, Jesus wasn’t talking about giving things to a person who already has good things to eat and drink and wear. Jesus was talking about helping people that hardly anyone pays attention to. Like families who have lost their homes. And people who live in countries where there is not enough food to go around. And people who are sick and are treated unfairly.

SIDNEY: Oh. Like that kid in my class at school, George, whose dad lost his job. Everyone makes fun of him ‘cause he has holes in his shirts and his shoes, and he’s really skinny and he gets all the answers wrong. He has six brothers and sisters just like him.

MARK: That’s exactly the kind of person Jesus was talking about. Have you done anything to be his friend?

SIDNEY: Uh...no...I laughed at him just like the others. I’m guilty! Guess I’m one of the goats, too. *(Bleating)* Baaaaaaa...

MARK: The good news, Sidney, is that Jesus will help you become a sheep. Ask Jesus for the courage and the wisdom to know how to help George and others in the world who are in need, and he promises to help you.

SIDNEY: Well, it won’t be easy, but if Jesus will help me do it, I can do it! Even if it’s only one person at a time.

MARK: If each of us sheep will make that commitment, think of all the people we can help!

SIDNEY: Cool! Can you help me out of this robe?

MARK: You don’t want to be a judge anymore?

SIDNEY: No way! I want the best job of all—a sheep who follows Jesus!

MARK: We can all do that job. Let’s pray. *Merciful God, we thank you for being a judge who has given us an endless number of chances to change our ways and do what is right and just for people in need. Help us have the courage and wisdom and strength to share and help others, in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

SIDNEY: Amen! Say, Mark, do you think I’d look good in wool?

—Mark McClintock is the director of PassportKids, a summer children’s camping program. He lives in Birmingham, Alabama, with his wife Michelle, his daughter Maggie and several ventriloquist’s puppets. From Sacred Seasons, Hunger Emphasis 2003, “Let All Who Are Hungry Come in and Eat.”