

Sermon: November 23, 2008
“Who’s gonna make it???? --- surprise!!”

Life can be so ironic ... right?
Those who are sure they are “going to make it” ... maybe they won’t
Those who don’t think they have a chance? ... they are chosen.
Honestly ... I don’t know if there ever will be a “judgment day.” In a way ----- everyday is judgment day!!
What we do with our lives and our time ...
Our actions ... how we treat others ...
How we handle a crisis ... how we handle the good times and the tough times ...

Think of all we are going through in our lives and in our country ...
Are we living with courage? ... with grace? ... are we becoming overly cynical and bitter?
OR ----- are we using these sometimes-troubling times as an opportunity to get in touch with what is
“really real” in life ... helping us to focus on what’s important and what’s not????

I have a pretty basic question: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GO TO HEAVEN?
Who gets in ? ... who doesn’t? ... how about you??
How about your “Uncle Ernie” ----- who has never set foot inside a church?
Your Jewish aunt? Your angry brother .. who doesn’t understand how God “can let this happen”???
Then there is your sister Edna ... who had a conversion experience last year ... and now is a self-proclaimed
expert on who is saved and who is not.

I think of Joanne’s dad. Joanne comes up to me the other day ... thanking me for visiting her dad in the nursing
home. Then she breaks down: “Don ... I’m worried about my dad’s soul!!”

There are lots of things to worry about in this world: paying our bills ... taking care of our country ...
being with our loved-one who is living with cancer ... making sure our kids and grand-kids are ok ...
our lonely neighbor down the block.
We should worry about being decent to each other ... holding one another up ...
speaking up for those who can’t speak for themselves ...
YES --- THERE IS A LOT IN LIFE TO WORRY ABOUT but, Joanne ----
your dad’s soul is not one of them!!
Your dad’s soul ... your soul ...the souls of each of us gathered here this morning ----- they are just fine.
Our souls are in God’s hands ... this is precisely where your daddy’s soul is!!

Your soul is YOU.
It’s the way you walk ... it’s the way you talk ... it’s the way you carry yourself.
Your soul is the spirit inside your heart ... it’s the look in your eyes ... it’s how you spend your time.
It’s the way you care ... it’s the hope you share.

I am so tired of churches and preachers who are so smack-dab sure of who is going to “make it” and who is not.
It’s like judgment and salvation are their prerogative.
Well ... we don’t need this kind of religion.
Rather ----- we need religion that PULLS US TOGETHER ... religion uniting us in a oneness of spirit.

So, in the gospel for this morning ... Jesus is telling us a story about the “judgment day.”
Everyone is gathered together ... it’s time for the reckoning ... dividing us into the sheep and the goats.
This reminds me of being a kid on the playground ----- picking teams ... who will be on my team? ...
who will be on yours???

First ... Jesus picks out the sheep --- the ones who get to be in his kingdom ... the ones on “Jesus’ team.”
The sheep don’t understand.

*How do we get in? We hardly ever go to church ----- maybe 2-3 times per year at All Saints!@!!
They’ve been made to feel guilty for their apparent “lack of religion” ... and here they are -----
BEING CHOSEN FOR THE KINGDOM!!*

“We are just curious, Lord ... why have you picked us?”

Jesus responds:

When I was naked, you clothed me. When I was lonely, you visited me.
When I was in prison, you didn’t give-up on me. When I was hungry, you feed me.
But, Lord ... when did we do this???
Whenever you did this to any one of my children ... you were actually doing it to me!!

The goats are equally surprised ---- by NOT being chosen.
Why aren’t we “in”??? *We go to church every Sunday. We believe all the right things.
We’ve been baptized ... we know the Bible up-and-down!!*

Again, Jesus responds;

You don’t understand. When I was naked, you gave me no clothing. When I was lonely, you did not visit me.
When I was in prison, you gave-up on me. When I was hungry, you gave me nothing to eat.
But, Lord ---- we don’t remember not doing this!

Whenever you refused to give someone clothing ... whenever you did not visit someone who is lonely ...
when you gave up on that person in prison ... when you chose not to share your food with your neighbor ...
you were actually refusing me!

No “ifs” ... “ands” ... or “buts” ...

You can go to mass everyday ... come here every Sunday ... you can say and pretend to “believe” all the
right things.

But let us be reminded: salvation ... heaven ... It’s all about *being at one* with the goodness and power
of the human spirit. And when you are “at one” with the God-given spirit of yourself and our
brothers and sisters ... well, this is where we meet God!.

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