

When Did You See Me Hungry?

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[0 : 01] A man was in a restaurant and he ordered a large pizza. When it was brought to his table, the waiter asked him if he would like it sliced into four pieces or six.

The man thought about this for a moment and then he replied, you better make it four slices. I don't think I could possibly manage six. There are different ways of looking at the same reality.

When I think about this passage from Matthew 25, that's what challenges me most. Jesus tells us that there will be a time when we will look back on our lives and realise that there were so many situations that we could have approached in different ways, looking at them, seeing them differently.

Every day there are circumstances which present themselves with choices as to how we respond. On the one hand, we can look at a person in need and we can see them negatively, maybe treating them with suspicion or regarding them as an inconvenience or just focusing in on whatever happens to be negative about them.

And incidentally, all of us have something negative about us because none of us are perfect. On the other hand, we can look at the other person and we can see them as an opportunity to serve Christ by serving them.

[1 : 33] Every day is bursting with opportunities. If only we could exercise just a bit more discernment in spotting them. In recent years, we've been talking of FOMO, fear of missing out.

But there's nothing new about the idea of being poised to seize the moment. It was the year AD 79. The ladies' hands were full of rings, bracelets, necklaces, chains and other pieces of jewellery. Torrents of lava were erupting and pouring down from Mount Vesuvius. As she fled, this woman was not prepared to leave behind her valuable jewels.

Encumbered by her treasures, she was overwhelmed by the rain of ashes from the volcano and was buried under it. During the course of modern building operations, her petrified body was found outside the area of the buried city of Pompeii.

An ancient Roman port. Her body was unearthed in a sea of jewels. She lost her life in an attempt to save her treasures.

[2 : 49] In the rush of the moment, she was confronted with the question of what mattered most to her and ordered her priorities and choices accordingly. She seized what seemed to be of highest importance.

And so it is that we face choices each and every day of our lives. We might not be faced with the critical moment of how we escape an erupting volcano.

But let's not make the mistake of thinking that everyday life is any less critical. In every conversation, in every interaction, in every decision, no matter how mundane, there usually exists some kind of opportunity.

And today's Bible reading challenges us to keep our eyes and our ears and our minds and our hearts open to the question of how God might be served in each such opportunity.

In Romans 12, Paul writes, If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. And then in 1 Peter 3.15, it says, Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

[4 : 07] See, that's the life we're called to live, to always be ready and ready to say and do whatever is needed to share hope and peace with others, to generate hope and peace, grabbing every opportunity we can to reach out into the lives of others.

It might not always be obvious. I guess that's the point. That's the point of the story that Jesus tells us here. Most opportunities to bring hope and peace to the world and to transform the lives of others are presented to us in ways that are subtle and which can easily be missed.

So let me leave you with the following image. I want you to imagine that you have in your hands a box of matches. When you look at that box of matches, when you pick it up and shake it in your hand, what do you see?

Is it just a little cardboard box containing a pile of small wooden sticks? Or do you see something that needs to be regarded with a bit of care and caution?

Would you give it to a small child to play with? Now, I know how you would answer that question.

And the reason I know is because we've all learned to recognise that a box of matches is something more than a small box of sticks.

[5 : 36] When we see it, we see not cardboard and wood, but we see sparks and flames. We think not of the thing itself, but the potential that it carries.

I believe that's how that picture of the sheep and the goats should leave us feeling about our lives that lie ahead of us.

We see through and beyond that which is presented to us. Ready to meet and greet each conversation and interaction as an opportunity packed with potential to make a difference for some good in some way.

So next time you're eating pizza, ask yourself, is that four slices or six? Six.