24/02/2020

Why does our Lord separate the goats from the sheep at the Last Judgment?



The parable of the Last Judgment begins by saying that Jesus will separate us “as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats.” Okay, but what is the connection between sheep and goats with the Fearful Judgment?

The parable of the Last Judgement
Before answering, let’s first look at the parable:

“But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. Before him all the nations will be gathered, and he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will tell those on his right hand, ‘Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry, and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was a

stranger, and you took me in. I was naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you visited me. I was in prison, and you came to me.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry, and feed you; or thirsty, and give you a drink? When did we see you as a stranger, and take you in; or naked, and clothe you? When did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to you?’

“The King will answer them, ‘Most certainly I tell you, because you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ Then he will say also to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you didn’t give me food to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and you didn’t take me in; naked, and you didn’t clothe me; sick, and in prison, and you didn’t visit me.’

“Then they will also answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and didn’t help you?’

“Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Most certainly I tell you, because you didn’t do it to one of the least of these, you didn’t do it to me.’ These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

– Matthew 25: 31-46

So we see that our Lord will judge us all on the basis of mercy, the compassion we show – or, on the contrary, the indifference – of our fellow human beings. The Lord mentions from relatively difficult things to simple things to do because the visit of the sick can be understood as the visit of a patient at the Emergency Hospital but can also be understood as a good word addressed to someone who is suffering from sadness. A smile, a good word, a short walk together can greatly help someone suffering from loneliness, depression.

Sheep and goats are remembered here because the differences between the behaviors of these animals show where we are from a behavioral point of view and how we can do good deeds to reach eternal life and avoid the condemnation of eternal loneliness.

So what are the differences between sheep and goats?

Sheep love unity. They remain with the flock, they do not break up and they do not like isolation. On the contrary, the goats take it forward, they divide very easily, looking for the territories and variants beyond the area where the shepherd directed them

The sheep listen to the shepherd. They follow him naturally, know his voice, love

him and feel good around him and are very easy to drive. The goats are very rebellious, they are ready for disobedience, they want independence and they listen very easily to their thoughts.
The sheep support the pain. When they are sick or hit, they quietly endure. They endure their pain without screaming. The goats have big mouths, are weeping and make an immediate scandal.
So let us not forget that the key to our salvation is merciful behavior towards the other through love, and love comes from God because God is love.

If someone does not want to be merciful, he does not want love, he does not want God so he does not want life.

On the other hand, the lack of love is, in fact, the lack of God, that is, eternal condemnation. Even at the last moment, at the Last Judgement, the goats (unlike the sheep) rebelled against God, saying, “But when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and didn’t help you??” and their rebellion became eternal, an empty rebellion, a meaningless rebellion.

A moment from the Divine Liturgy, Vatopedi Monastery, Mount Athos
asceticexperience.com