



Midweek Meditation: ***The Great Camp Draft***

‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ Matthew 25:40 (NRSV)

Have you watched any Reality TV? They call it “reality”, but it seems rather scripted with characters set up as competitors, some as darlings and some as rascals. If you’ve watched one of these shows you’ll have some idea. A couple of years ago I saw an episode of “Undercover Boss.” For those who don’t know, the plot of this series comprised the video recording of a company’s CEO, in disguise, getting hired by his own company and working with, and observing his own workers. On this episode the boss of the YMCA in Canada worked alongside three of his people, a Summer Camp Coordinator a swimming Class Instructor and program coordinator and another worker. The days went by as he worked and watched.

Finally he calls the employees to his office. There he revealed his true identity, to the total surprise and apprehension of the employees. He was pleased with the camp coordinator’s work and rewarded him with equipment that would make his work a lot easier. This employee was very relieved, and gladly accepted his reward. The swimming class coordinator did excellent work and was heartily congratulated for her dedication and attitude to her tasks and received a promotion and further training to advance her career pathway. The third worker was counselled and encouraged to improve his performance in order to keep his job. He was on notice.

In the story of the Judgment of the Nations (Matthew 25: 31-46) Jesus describes his coming as The Son of Man, who is a kind of undercover boss. He separates out, as a farmer drafts a flock or herd, those who act with compassion toward the hungry, the thirsty of the world and the naked poor from those who are unmoved by the plight of these very same people. The former are enjoined to share in the blessedness of the Heavenly Father, the latter are condemned by their own actions (or lack of) to dreadful separation from that blessed state.

Everyone is caught by surprise. How were they to know? No one told them the rules, really. But the Boss, had already come in the faces of the suffering ones. He is to be seen amongst us, even in anguished faces. These are faces that are often ignored. They are unseen ones on the fringes of human society, outside of the mainstream. And yes, they are found at the edges of Australian society too.

We should not be surprised at this sobering story of a judgment. Jesus had spent three years living and preaching and reaching out to those outside the mainstream of his society (see Luke 14:7-14). He associated with those others regarded as sinners, and he was judged for it (Luke 15:2-3). He broke down social barriers, met a Samaritan woman at a well (John 4: 8-9), he smashed walls of hatred of the invaders by responding to a Roman centurion’s plea (Matthew 8:5). He engaged in conversation with another outsider, a Syro-Phoenician woman, (Mark 7: 24-30) and healed her

daughter. There was a place at the feasting table for those usually forgotten when the self-satisfied ones excuse themselves (Matthew 22: 1-14). Jesus has told us and shown us.

Some questions to think about.

1. How did you encounter, for the first time, someone who was “different” in some way, from those around you?
2. What was your reaction to that person (or persons)?
3. What were the events or influences that have helped you regard all people, whatever their situation, as beloved of God, and worthy of compassion?
4. Where have you experienced discrimination against or lack of empathy for others because they seemed different? What was your response?

The UCA and AUC congregations have a strong history of supporting those on the edges of society, whether migrant families, Australian Indigenous ministries, those down on their luck, the aged and others. It is our way of participating in Christ’s vision of the Kingdom of God, and it is just what the imperative of the Gospel requires. May we actively seek out further ways to live it out.

Community Prayer:

*O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do, flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other’s burdens and the weight of glory. Listen to our hearts’ longing for healing of our world [Please add your own intentions.]... Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God, Amen. – Richard Rohr*

From: RFK Discipleship Team