

# Matthew 25:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

## Analysis

This profound statement comes from Jesus' parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46), describing final judgment. The King (Christ) explains that serving 'the least of these my brethren' (τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν ἐλαχίστων/ton adelphon mou ton elachiston) equals serving Him personally. 'Inasmuch as' (ἐφ' ὅσον/eph' hoson) means 'to the extent that' or 'insofar as'—actions toward the vulnerable and marginalized directly affect Christ. This doesn't teach salvation by works; rather, genuine faith necessarily produces compassion for the needy (James 2:14-17). Those united to Christ by faith naturally care for His 'brethren'—likely referring primarily to fellow believers, though the principle extends to all in need. The passage lists concrete acts: feeding the hungry, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned. These aren't extraordinary heroics but ordinary compassion. Our treatment of the vulnerable reveals whether we truly know Christ.

## Historical Context

This teaching appears in Jesus' final discourse before His crucifixion. He prepares disciples for a future when He would no longer be physically present—yet He remains mysteriously present in suffering believers. Early Christians took this literally, creating unprecedented systems of care for widows, orphans, poor, and sick (Acts 6:1-6; James 1:27). Their compassion distinguished Christianity from surrounding culture and testified to the gospel's transforming power. Roman

emperor Julian (apostate who rejected Christianity) complained that Christians' care for the poor—even pagan poor—made Christianity attractive.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does Christ's identification with 'the least of these' elevate the dignity of serving the marginalized?
2. In what practical ways can you serve Christ by caring for vulnerable people this week?
3. How does this teaching challenge individualistic faith disconnected from compassionate action toward the needy?

## Interlinear Text

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|          |              |       |              |             |              |        |       |
|----------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------|-------|
| καὶ      | ἀποκριθεὶς   | ό     | βασιλεὺς     | έρει        | αὐτοῖς       | Ἄμὴν   | λέγω  |
| And      | shall answer | G3588 | the King     | and say     | unto them    | Verily | I say |
| G2532    | G611         |       | G935         | G2046       | G846         | G281   | G3004 |
| ὑμῖν     | ἐφ'          | ὅσον  | ἐποιήσατε    | ἐνὶ         | τούτων       | τῶν    |       |
| unto you | Inasmuch     | as    | ye have done | it unto one | of these     | G3588  |       |
| G5213    | G1909        | G3745 | G4160        | G1520       | G5130        |        |       |
| ἀδελφῶν  | μου          | τῶν   | ἐλαχίστων    | ἐμοὶ        | ἐποιήσατε    |        |       |
| brethren | my           | G3588 | of the least | it unto me  | ye have done |        |       |
| G80      | G3450        |       | G1646        | G1698       | G4160        |        |       |

## Additional Cross-References

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**Proverbs 19:17** (Parallel theme): He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

**Proverbs 14:31** (Parallel theme): He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.

**Matthew 10:42** (Parallel theme): And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

**Mark 9:41** (Parallel theme): For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

**1 Peter 1:22** (Parallel theme): Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

**Galatians 5:6** (Parallel theme): For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

**Galatians 5:22** (Parallel theme): But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

**Hebrews 6:10** (Parallel theme): For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

**Matthew 10:40** (Parallel theme): He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

**Ephesians 5:30** (Parallel theme): For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.