

**Do you ever wish for life just to be a little bit easier?  
a little more clear cut?  
Do ever wish that at least just once in a while the answer  
would be brilliantly evident:  
do I do A or B?  
go left or right?  
choose regular or decaf?**

**At first glance, Matthew's Gospel seems to fulfill your wish:  
Here comes Jesus in Kingly majesty...  
Matthew can't get any more clear about whose in charge!  
and this Gospel is once again very true to Matthew's style:  
there is eternal damnation, fire and the devil...  
That imagery is hard to shake, even if we say that we don't believe it.  
It fuels the human imagination and it's a convenient...  
as well as very often successful as way to control people...  
Fear often is used that way...  
That's nothing new!  
Trouble is, that's not the style of Jesus...  
he DIDN'T use fear to control people**

**So what gives?**

**We have a clue about 'what gives' in the question that both the goats and the sheep  
ask The Son of Man:**

**This is the way the goats put the question: "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or  
thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not take care of you?"**

**What's implied in their question is that if they knew it had been him, they would have!  
But the Lord responds: "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of  
these, you did not do it to me."**

**Think about it! That...is.... a truly remarkable....**

**radical Good News kind of statement!!!**

**Matthew begins by using the traditional language of royalty, hellfire and brimstone and paints a picture of the Son of Man coming in glory...accompanied by the angels... sitting on the throne of his glory and ALL the nations are gathered before him, probably below him: a true vision of majesty, power and authority...**

**So far nothing new, right?**

**This is how all powerful Earthly kings would be....**

**This is how the Roman Emperor would appear...**

**But then... it is as if, the King, the Son of Man.. comes down off of his throne and stands with the poor, the lonely, the hungry, naked, the sick and those imprisoned.**

**“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of thee who are members of my family, you did it to me.”**

**What *kind* of God says this?**

**Not the gods of the ancient world**

**But, this image of God, this kind of God does fit with the memory of Jesus washing the disciples feet...**

**it fits with Jesus feeding the 5,000 and**

**it fits with Jesus curing the lepers and dining with the prostitutes..**

**it fits with Jesus blessing the children...**

**Next week we enter the season of Advent..**

**shortly thereafter we will be celebrating Christmas:**

**the birth of the Messiah..**

**We will celebrate the Incarnation: the belief, the understanding,**

**the deep knowing that God is inseparable from humanity  
and humanity is inseparable from Divinity!**

**For 2,000 + years we Christians have been celebrating the birth of the God becoming  
human...**

**Yet, we have continued to use the language of royalty  
King of the Universe!**

**Lord of Lords! in such a way that Jesus, that God is totally disconnected from what  
God had created...**

**and some of us were taught to bow very, very low,  
and some of us were taught to only approach the King in our Sunday best  
and then to never touch anything...**

**and some of us were taught that we had to be perfectly good to  
come to the Lord's table....**

**but yet, but yet...in our gospel today Jesus  
identifies him with the smallest and weakest  
and most vulnerable among us....**

**with all those people who are hungry and hurting and poor and alone.**

**I would be willing to bet that the poor have a few stains on their Sunday best ...**

**I would be willing to bet that all those people in prison probably aren't perfectly 'good'**

**I would be willing to bet that all those who are sick probably can't bow down very far..**

**And that image of Jesus...that image of God that Matthew offers is  
radically, gratefully, gracefully and it changes the whole ball game!**

**As I see it,**

**if you want to use the royal language: Lord of Lords, King of the Universe...**

**by all means, go ahead!**

**but please don't think that the King sits on a throne disconnected from everything and  
everyone else...**

**If Jesus is King of the Universe you won't find him sitting on a throne.  
but sitting on the curb with his feet in the gutter offering  
the homeless person sitting next to  
him the other half of a week old peanut butter and jelly sandwich...**

**Or you might find him sitting on the bench in the jail cell with the prostitute  
who was trying to feed her kids....**

**or you just might find him wiping the forehead of a gay guy dying from aids...  
or maybe offering his coat to the old man sleeping under the viaduct  
in the middle of February.**

**Will this King of King look Kingly? on a throne surrounded by angels?  
I highly doubt it...**

**But if you are looking for a royal heart,  
a heart rich in compassion and love  
then you will recognize the King  
no matter what he or she is wearing...**

**Ahhh...Life may not be easy nor our decisions clear cut  
but our choices in life will be much more simple when we use the eyes of our heart...  
and for that we can be forever thankful! Amen.**