



*Stories for ears to hear...*

The Sheep and the Goats- Matthew 25, 31-46

# Not many themes run across all scripture ...

Ideas of God repeat

- Worshipping one God
- God's love for his people
- The concept of forgiving

But one or two commands are also written across almost every book ...







"The least of these"

## ***Sheep & Goats – Matthew 25 from verse 31***

‘Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was ill and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison and go to visit you?”

The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

‘Then he will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was ill and in prison and you did not look after me.”

They also will answer, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or ill or in prison, and did not help you?”

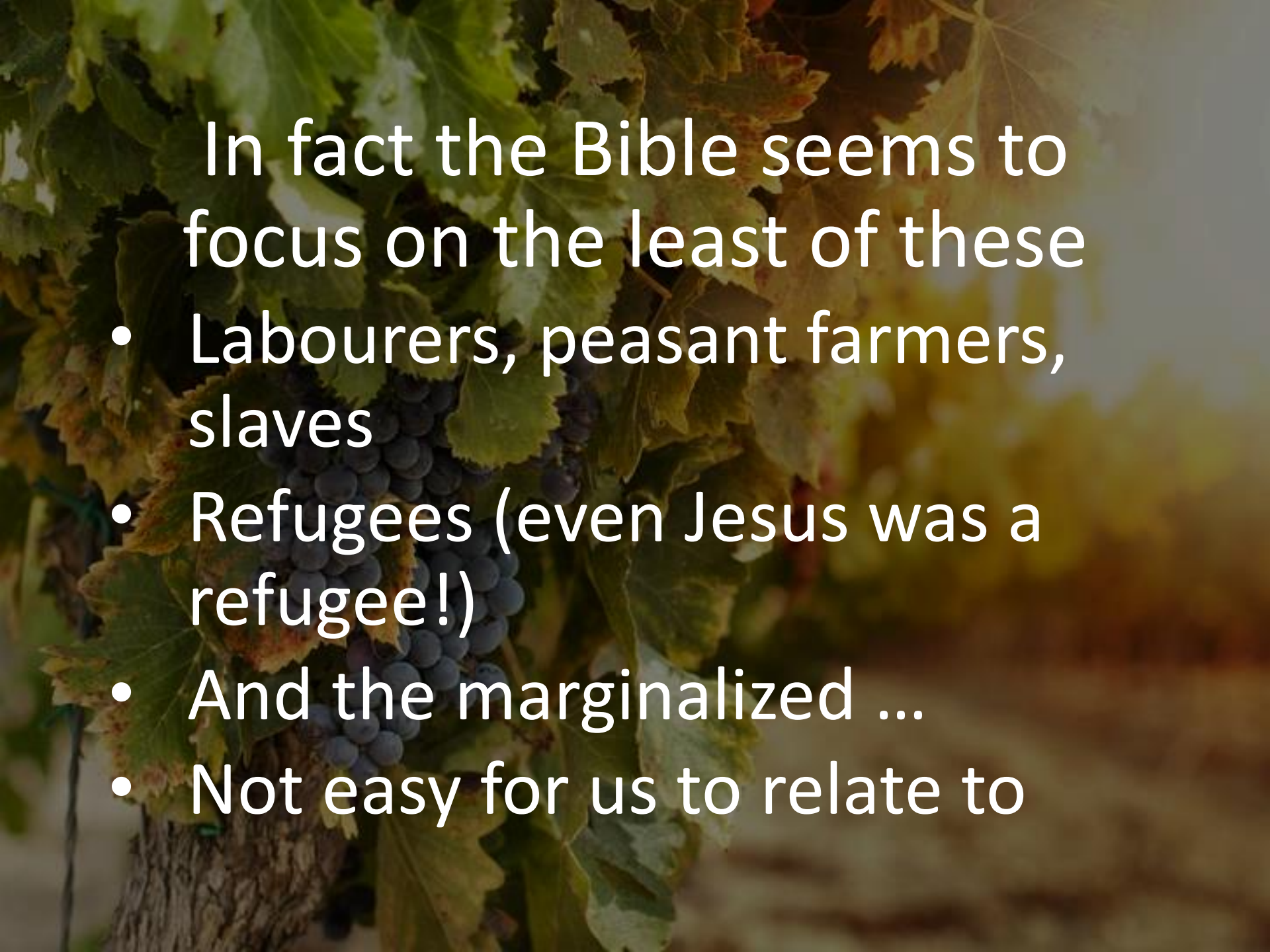
‘He will reply, “Truly I tell you whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.





On the face of it today's  
Big Idea seems obvious:

- “The least of these”
- Seeking the good of the poor - the vulnerable – offering hospitality
- ... And God seems really concerned about this ... even measuring us by what we do

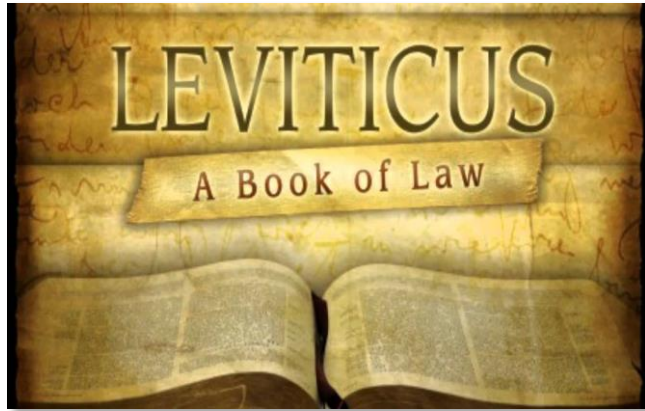


In fact the Bible seems to focus on the least of these

- Labourers, peasant farmers, slaves
- Refugees (even Jesus was a refugee!)
- And the marginalized ...
- Not easy for us to relate to

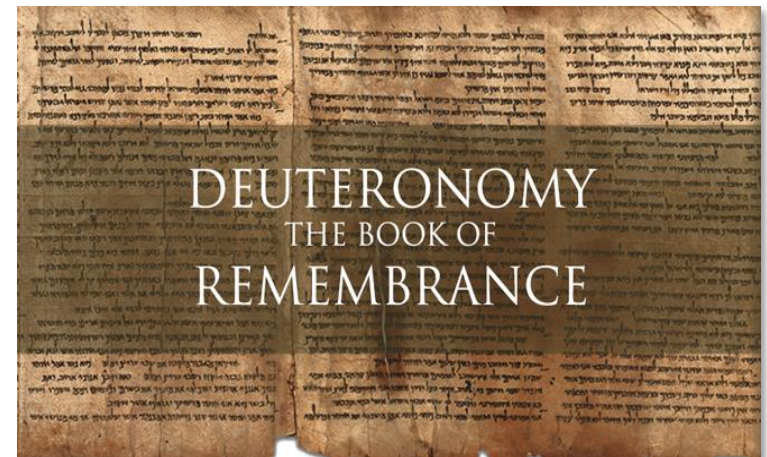


# A repeating theme across the Bible has to be important



- “I desire mercy not sacrifice” ... *repeats as the grain of scripture*

- Deut 10.18-19:  
The Lord defends the rights of orphans and widows. He cares for foreigners and gives them food and clothing ...



# A repeating theme across the Bible has to be important



Micah

- Micah 6:8: “what does the LORD require of you but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly”

“The multitude of your sacrifices, what are they to me?” Isaiah 1



ISAIAH

*The grain of scripture focuses hard on “the least of these”*



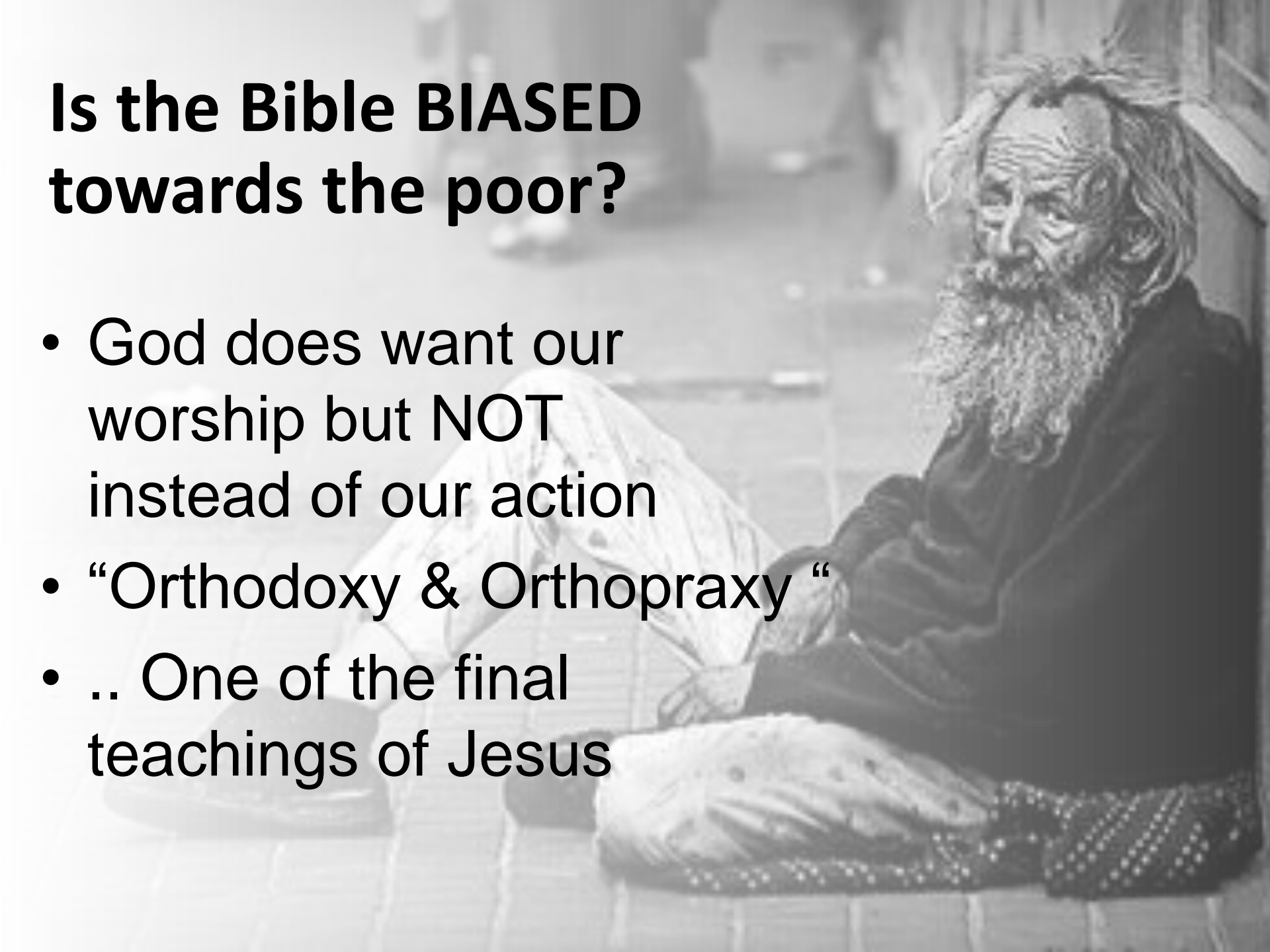
# And continuing in the NT

“You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill and cumin but you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the former without neglecting the latter!” Matthew 23

- Galatians 2:10: “...all they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do”.

# Is the Bible **BIASED** towards the poor?

- God does want our worship but NOT instead of our action
- “Orthodoxy & Orthopraxy “
- .. One of the final teachings of Jesus





# What's with the sheep and the goats?

- People understood it
- Sheep worth more than goats
- Mixed during the day – separated at night
- Actually looked quite similar from the outside ...





# What's with the sheep and the goats?

- But Jesus says on the inside they are different
- Our actions have consequences – they bring us nearer to or further from God

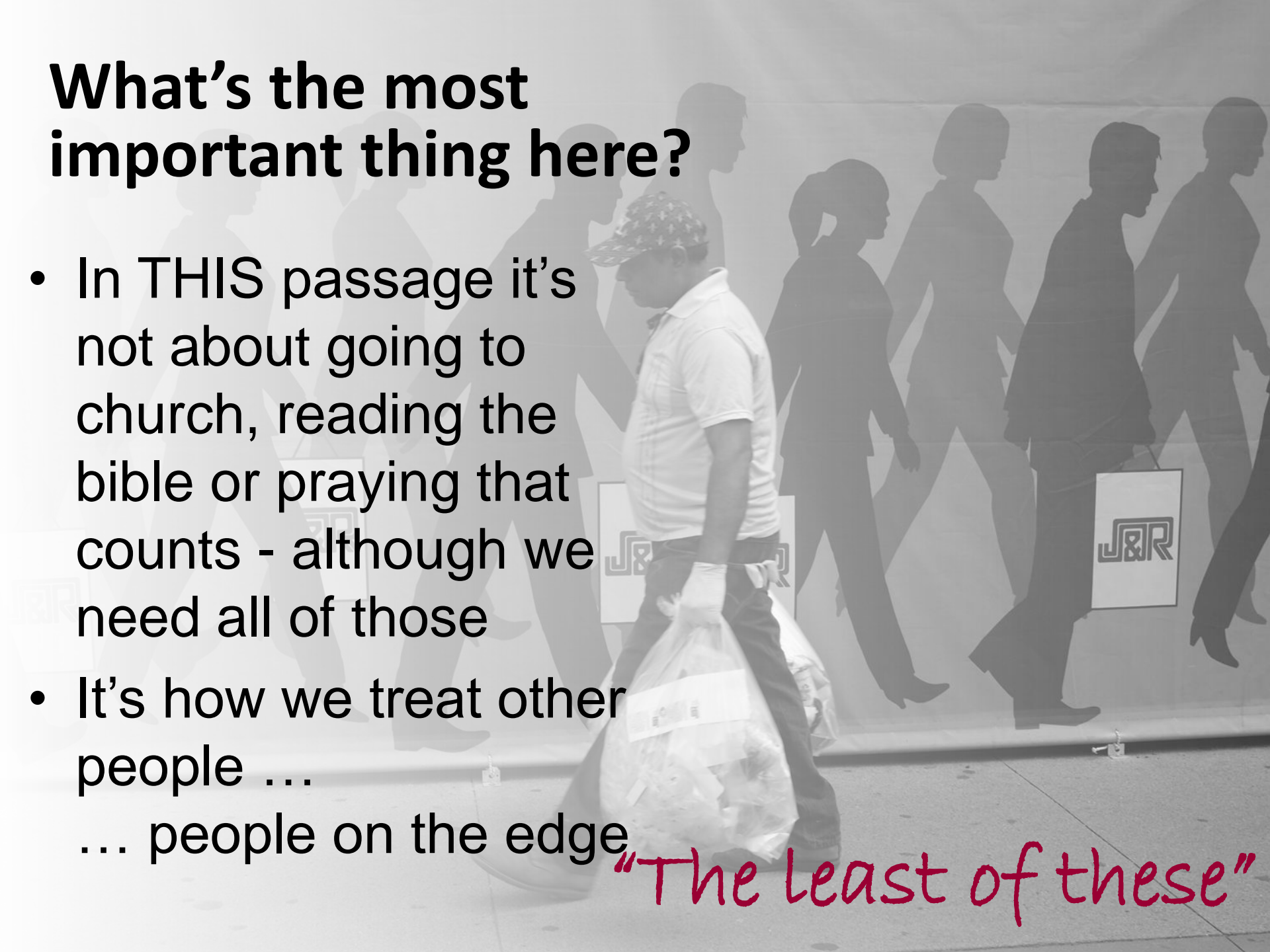




# What's the most important thing here?

- In THIS passage it's not about going to church, reading the bible or praying that counts - although we need all of those
- It's how we treat other people ...  
... people on the edge

*"The least of these"*



# But aren't we saved by faith alone?

- Of course - BUT it doesn't end there
- **Faith** (what I believe) AND **Works** (what I do) – both matter ...
- Our daily living (our works) is the **evidence** of faith & the **accelerator** of faith
- And with the “goats” there is no evidence ...



†  
SALVATION  
by GRACE  
through  
FAITH  
ALONE





***JAMES 2 – “Show me how  
anyone can have faith  
without actions - I will  
show you my faith by my  
actions”***

**And Martin Luther  
didn't say “we are  
saved by faith alone”**



# *Stories for ears to hear...*

1. Parable of the Talents – Readiness which means faithfulness
2. Parable of the 10 virgins – “a long obedience in the same direction”
3. Badly dressed guest at the wedding - not just what you believe but what you do with your belief



# What are we supposed to DO?

- These days we are bombarded with pictures and news like this all the time
  - Children's charities
  - Refugee crisis
  - Even close to here
- We don't feel we can deal with it

*What are we supposed to DO?*

# But this passage tells us what to do ... and what not to do

- God doesn't say "well done" because you solved the problem of hunger ...
- He says it because you helped that ONE person – showed them common humanity
- Using our voices, our prayers, our money

... so what?

*"The least of these"*





*Stories for ears to hear...*

How can we respond – simply ...now?



**Who are  
“the least  
of these”?**

- The least of these are both local & distant
- I picked an example close to my heart
- Meet Simon and Julia Hawthorne
- Working for 20 years in India with Dalits
- ... *who are the Dalits?*



# The Indian Dalit man killed for eating in front of upper-caste men

By Vineet Khare  
BBC Hindi, Uttarakhand

20 May 2019



# A 3000 year old apartheid system

**Brahmins**  
priests & teachers

**Kshatriyas**  
warriors & rulers

**Vaishyas**  
farmers, traders & merchants

**Shudras**  
labourers

**Dalits (outcastes)**  
Street sweepers,  
latrine cleaners



But there is good news for the least of these:  
**LifeAssociation.org.uk**  
Homes – schools – cottage industry





Dalit.co.uk

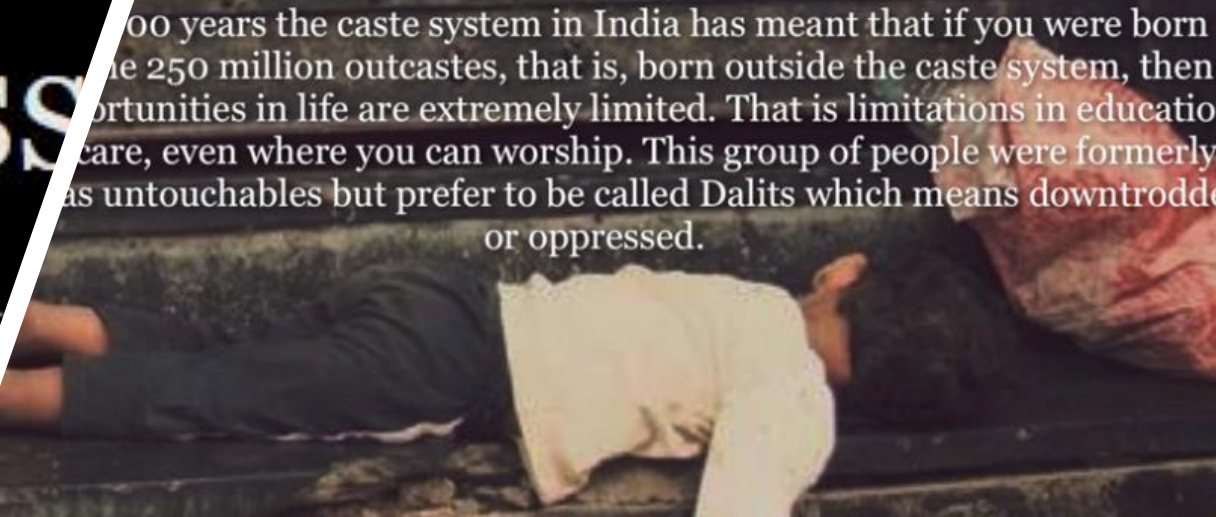


WITH A PASS

## WHO ARE THE DALIT PEOPLE

For 100 years the caste system in India has meant that if you were born as one of the 250 million outcasts, that is, born outside the caste system, then your opportunities in life are extremely limited. That is limitations in education, health care, even where you can worship. This group of people were formerly known as untouchables but prefer to be called Dalits which means downtrodden or oppressed.

OF THE DALIT PLIGHT  
SUPPORT OUR WORK WITH



# Life

## *Association*

Building futures, Saving lives.



Not for you? but do SOMETHING in the next day or two ...

If you want to help - 2<sup>nd</sup> plate collection:

- If you are able
- If you want to Gift Aid
- If you didn't bring anything today





*Stories for ears to hear...*