

Matthew 25:31-46  
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“Finding Christ in the Vulnerable”

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One of my personal interests, or if I am honest, one of my weaknesses... is sporty cars. That's why this week I was stunned to hear the report of an Italian car maker gifting Pope Francis with a brand-new Lamborghini. The car is a Lamborghini Huracan, it is white with gold trim, and has a V10 engine. From a standstill this car can reach 60 mph in less than three seconds, and in just over 10 seconds the driver can be a quarter mile down the road. That's really, really, fast!

The Pope's new car lists at a cost of more than \$225,000. But, if you have been paying attention to these sorts of gifts made to the Pope over the years, you may recall he has a Midas touch... back in 2014 the Pope was given a Harley Davidson motorcycle and jacket which was auctioned for \$285,000, more than 10 times the list price. The jacket alone, signed by the Pope, drew \$68,000. Even an iPad the Pope had sold for over \$30,000.

The photograph associated with the Lamborghini story shows Pope Francis signing the hood of the supercar. Can you imagine what that will do to the price of this car? Well, if you have the means and want to make a bid to buy the Pope's Lambo... the auction is set to happen in May of 2018. A gift for Mom on Mother's Day perhaps? A gift for the new College graduate? I can hardly imagine the price that car will bring.

Today is Reign of Christ Sunday. Today, the church year comes full circle, 51 weeks ago we were waiting for the babe of Bethlehem to be born, lighting the advent candle of hope, right where we will be again next Sunday. But before we start all over we pause to celebrate where the story has been leading us. The waiting of advent, the birth of Christmas, the light of epiphany, the suffering journey of lent, the death of Holy week and resurrection of Eastertide... all the stories of summer and fall pointing us to Christ who we proclaim to be the One who decisively reveals the fullness of God and shows us how to live. It all culminates in this day, where we acknowledge Christ as Lord of our life and lord of the world.

For many Christians today's story from Matthew is discipleship in abbreviated form. The end of the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter stands alongside the golden rule and the beatitudes as one of the most referenced bible passages by Christians talking about faith. In this story we discover our calling to be Christ with each other.

Many of us easily accept how we are being Christ-like when we go and help others in need; but Matthew's story reinforces that Christ is present not only in the helper, but in the person receiving help. "I was hungry and you gave me food to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, and so on..." Christ positions himself in and with the vulnerable, the needy, the ones receiving help.

With this magnificent gift from carmaker Lamborghini, Pope Francis is using it to be a faithful sheep, to serve others. It would be tough for me to give up that beautiful, fast car... think how fast I could get to home communions, church meetings, and hospital visits.

But not this Pope. When faced with the glitz and glamour of this amazing gift, the Pope sees... not fun for himself, or a lot of speeding tickets... he sees an opportunity to serve Christ in those who are needy. The story reports the Vatican will auction the car, with proceeds going to charity.

One of the Charities supported will be the Pope John XXIII Community Association which advocates and networks to fight human trafficking by counseling prostitutes on the streets and setting up hostels to house them. The organization claims to have freed more than 7,000 women from prostitution since launching its program in 1989. It plans to put the money from the auction toward establishing a new ministry for victims of human trafficking called the "Pope Francis home."

Pope Francis sees Christ in the women trapped in human trafficking, and in all the world's needy. Just last year in August the Pope took time to visit 20 former sex slaves in various countries.

Evangelical Christian and Author Jim Wallis writes about a humble woman, Mary Glover, who helped mentor him into the Christian faith. He says, "Matthew 25 brought me to Christ out of the student movements of my time and led me to help begin Sojourners. We moved into one of the poorest parts of Washington, D.C., in the neighborhood where Mrs. Glover lived.

After a while, and in response to growing need, we joined with neighbors to start a simple food line on Saturday mornings, where many people lined up just 20 blocks from the White House to get a big bag of groceries that would get their families through the week. Volunteers, who actually needed their own bags of groceries, came to put them together each week before we opened the line. Once everything was ready, we prayed. Mary Glover, a powerful Pentecostal woman of faith, would always pray, "Thank you Lord, for waking me up this morning; that the walls of my room were not the walls of my grave, and my bed was not my cooling board. Lord, we know that you will be coming through this line today, so Lord, help us to treat you well — help us to treat you well. Amen."

Great God, truly Reign in and among us, show us how to be Christ and see Christ in each other, and help us always to "treat you well."

Amen