

## SERMON: Can I See Jesus Clearly Now? Matt. 25: 31 – 46



So the story goes.....

It was a cold winter's day that Sunday in February. The parking lot to the church was filling up quickly for the 8:30 Mass. As I got out of my car I happened to notice fellow church members whispering among themselves as they were walking toward the church doors. Some were pointing to a spot in the corner of the church grounds.

As I got closer I could see a man leaning up against a wall outside the church. He was crouched down in a huddled position as if he was asleep. He had on a long trench coat that was tattered almost in shreds and a knit hat topped his head....it was pulled down so you could not see his face. He wore a pair of old beat-up work shoes that were covered in mud. These shoes appeared too big for his feet, and there was a hole in the toe where his toe stuck out. I just assumed this man was a homeless person, who had stumbled onto the church grounds and fallen asleep against the wall....I walked on by him not knowing what to do but realizing if I did not hurry I would be late for church.

I slipped inside and took my place in the pews. The person sitting next to me brought up the man leaning on the wall outside church....we looked at each other in disbelief as to how he made his way to this neighborhood. There was a buzz throughout the church of people chattering and I could feel the uncomfortableness grow. Yet no one got up from their seats to ask the man to come in....no one at all....including me. A few moments later the organ music began signaling the start of Mass.

We all waited for Father to walk down the aisle and start Mass but Father never walked down the aisle. Instead the doors of the church opened. In came the homeless man walking down the aisle with his head down. We all gasped and asked "how dare this man enter looking so dirty and poor". But the man just made his way slowly down the aisle passing every pew until he was now on the altar. Up at the altar he bowed to the crucifix.....he took off his hat.....he took off his coat.

My heart sank.....no one said a word. The man looked at each of us sitting so comfortably in pews dressed in our Sunday best.....his eyes seemed piercing....then he paused and said an opening blessing.....his voice gentle and wise was one we each knew well.....for now it was clear that this was no ordinary homeless man..... this was Father, unshaven and dressed in rags, but nevertheless it was Father.

I wondered what Father would say and as he approached the pulpit to read that Sunday's gospel he said, "I don't think I have to tell you what I am preaching about today. So please listen to the Gospel according to Matthew."