

*Matthew 25:31-46 (NIV)*

*"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.*

*"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 sick 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 sick 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 sick 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 sick 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.'*

*"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."*

Ask God to help you see some ways in which you have put your own comfort, needs or desires before God's concern for "the least of these." Take up a blanket or scarf and wrap it around yourself, symbolically representing ways in which you've chosen to care for yourself and your concerns at the expense of God's concern for the poor and the planet. Maybe you have chosen not to engage with issues of justice because they don't personally affect you, or you feel apathetic about them. Or maybe you just feel overwhelmed and don't know where to start. Spend some time in a posture of

repentance, with the blanket or scarf wrapped around you, asking God to reveal what you need to know about how to live justly and care for Jesus in your neighbor, and how to be a better steward of the environment God has entrusted to us.

When you feel ready, take off the scarf or blanket and drape it over the cross. This is a picture of what Boaz did for Ruth, signifying his willingness to protect her and care for her, even though she was a foreigner and without resources of her own. As you place the scarf upon the cross you are signifying your readiness to care for “the least of these” in Jesus’ name. If a particular person, cause, or need comes to mind, name them as you drape the scarf, purposing to pray for and care for this need with all the strength God gives you.

*“Who are you?” he asked.*

*“I am your servant Ruth,” she said. “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family.”*

*“The Lord bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. And now, my daughter, don’t be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character. Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to do his duty as your guardian-redeemer, good; let him redeem you. But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives I will do it. Lie here until morning.”*

*So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, “No one must know that a woman came to the threshing floor.”*

*He also said, “Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out.” When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and placed the bundle on her. Then he went back to town. Ruth 3: 9-15*