



## **YOU ARE MY HANDS (Sermon)**

**May 11, 2019**

**Annet Ponte-Schouten  
Dutch Caribbean Union ADRA-ACS Director**

**Scripture Reading:** Matthew 25:31-40

**Opening Song:** “We Gather Together” *SDA Hymnal, No. 8.*

**Closing Song:** “Take My Life and Let It Be” *SDA Hymnal No. 330 (Commitment)*

A small town in Normandy, France, had suffered a great deal under the second world war. Many villagers died or were wounded. Many lost their relatives. The people felt defeated, lonely, and devastated. Many houses were destroyed. And so was the little church in the middle of the town.

American soldiers helped by building temporary houses and sheds for the people to live in. Some of the soldiers tried to restore what was left of the church. A lot of the relics were covered by debris.

This little church was famous for its medieval crucifix, which the people of the town loved and were attached to. They worried because they could not find the crucifix. So the soldiers started searching for this crucifix. Lo and behold, underneath all the debris, they found the cross. But... the crucifix was missing the hands. No matter how much they searched, they could not find the hands.

Then one of the soldiers took a piece of chalk and wrote in capitals on the wood:

**“YOU ARE MY HANDS”**

The people of the town did not understand: what does that mean? They were very tired and truly suffering. They missed their lost relatives. Their houses were destroyed and now their beloved cross was broken.

Then they read it again: “YOU ARE MY HANDS” and suddenly they understood. You have to heal what is broken, you have to help each other to rebuild and to comfort.

Is this not what the Gospel is all about? Jesus does not have other hands than your hands!

I love Ellen White's book, *The Desire of Ages*. In chapter 70 she beautifully writes what I believe is the center of the gospel: It is called "The Least of These My Brethren" and is based on [Matthew 25:31-46](#). First, let's read the texts from the Bible and then look at how Ellen White presents the word of God.

I quote from this chapter:

"When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another.' Thus Christ on the Mount of Olives pictured to His disciples the scene of the great judgment day. And He represented its decision as turning upon one point. When the nations are gathered before Him, there will be but two classes, and their eternal destiny will be determined by what they have done or have neglected to do for Him in the person of the poor and the suffering" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 637.1).

In this particular Bible passage, Jesus does not talk about the work He has done for us by giving His life, but He talks about what we have done for Him.

He does not talk about theological disputes or difference of opinion on several theological issues. He talks about the faithful work they (the righteous) have done for Him.

"To those whom He sets upon His right hand He will say, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and you gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me in: naked, and you clothed Me: I was sick, and you visited Me: I was in prison, and you came unto Me.' But those whom Christ commends know not that they have been ministering unto Him. "To their perplexed inquiries He answers, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me'" (*Desires of Ages*, p. 637.2).

"Jesus had told His disciples that they were to be hated of all men, to be persecuted and afflicted. Many would be driven from their homes, and brought to poverty. Many would be in distress through disease and privation. Many would be cast into prison. To all who forsook friends or home for His sake He had promised in this life a hundredfold. Now He assured a special blessing to all who should minister to their brethren. In all who suffer for My name, said Jesus, you are to recognize Me. As you would minister to Me, so you are to minister to them. This is the evidence that you are My disciples" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 637.3).

So, we can conclude that the proof of being His disciple is in how we express the love of Jesus.

*[Feel free to adjust the following paragraph, based on your situation.]* I am so inspired when I hear the stories of the members of my own church on the small island of Curaçao in the

Caribbean, where I live. This past Sabbath some members reported on how they made an impact on the people around the church. It is not that they were boasting, as these members were asked to come up front and tell their stories. Very reluctantly they came forward. They told the story of a young 15-year-old boy whom a church member heard crying. She went to him and comforted him. He had many personal problems and he needed clothes for a school festivity, but he did not have any. So she helped him with that. Next, our young people of the church decided to help him with his schoolwork. There is also the story of an ex-drug addict who participated in the church food program that they do every Sunday morning. This man really wanted to have his own Bible. He received a special invitation to church the Sabbath after his birthday and was given a Bible as his special birthday present.

Jesus says: “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40).

“All who have been born into the heavenly family are in a special sense the brethren of our Lord. The love of Christ binds together the members of His family, and wherever that love is made manifest there the divine relationship is revealed. ‘Everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God’ [1 John 4:7](#)” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 638.1).

“Those whom Christ commends in the judgment may have known little of theology, but they have cherished His principles. Through the influence of the divine Spirit they have been a blessing to those about them” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 638.2).

For ages people have thought about this end-time Bible passage in Matthew 25. It is clear that it is important what we do with our lives. Adventist Community Service matters and is making a difference. We cannot neglect what Jesus has asked us to do. Every human being will be held responsible for what he or she did with his or her life.

Jesus is King in this passage in Matthew 25 but a King who identifies Himself with the least of people. And He asks His followers to follow His example: to be a helper for those who cannot help themselves. And the inescapable other side of the coin: Woe them who did not help those in need.

As Ellen White says: “Those on the left hand of Christ, those who had neglected Him in the person of the poor and the suffering, were unconscious of their guilt. Satan had blinded them; they had not perceived what they owed to their brethren. They had been self-absorbed, and cared not for others’ needs” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 639.3).

Jesus came into this world as a child and as a servant King, and He will return as the King of Glory. Until that time, He comes to us and lives among us in the least of people.

“As you open your door to Christ’s needy and suffering ones, you are welcoming unseen angels. You invite the companionship of heavenly beings. They bring a sacred atmosphere of joy

and peace. They come with praises upon their lips, and an answering strain is heard in heaven. Every deed of mercy makes music there. The Father from His throne numbers the unselfish workers among His most precious treasures” (DA 639.2).

We have the best intentions, but sometimes we ask ourselves the question: “Can I do it?” With all our good intentions, sooner or later our hands break down because we are overwhelmed by daily life. We get frustrated by all the needs around us.

When you wonder how you can do all the things that you want to do as the hands of Christ, that is precisely the moment to go to Christ Himself who says that without Him we can do nothing. It is at that moment we realize that all we do is limited and falls short. We want to be the hands of Christ, but we cannot carry the world, we cannot redeem the world.

This is the moment to be like the little boy with the five loaves and two fish who put it all in the hands of the Lord. Everything we have and all we do, if we put it in the hands of Jesus, great things can happen.

“Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. And when His parting words are fulfilled, ‘Love one another, as I have loved you’ ([John 15:12](#)); when we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts” (*Desire of Ages* 641.3).

## **YOU ARE MY HANDS**

Let us do what we can to be His hands

Let us encourage each other to stand with God in this His world.

To do just, to fight evil, to make peace, and to love one another.

To be instruments for everyone we come across.

I believe that great things will happen then.

By the grace of God and knowing that He is beside me when I put everything I have and all I do in the hands of Jesus, I am assured that great things will happen. I want to be His hands! Do you want to be His hands as well?

God bless you as you go about His work, being His hands. Amen

*Annet Ponte is the Dutch Caribbean Union ADRA-ACS director and lives on the island of Curaçao. She is married to Hans Ponte executive secretary of that union. Annet comes originally from the Netherlands and is the mother of three children and proud grandma to four grandchildren. She loves to give the Gospel hands and feet in the SDA church and wants to be an inspirer for others to do the same.*