O Jesus … grant that, even if you are hidden under the unattractive disguise of anger, of crime, or of madness, I may recognize you and say, "Jesus, you who suffer, how sweet it is to serve you." This is a prayer attributed to Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Her prayer is that she will see and serve Christ in all persons – even those people we’d run away from – those who are angry with us or just plain crazy.

In the kingdom of the Good Shepherd, we are called to see Christ through the sacramentality of others. We are called to love our neighbors not only as we love ourselves but as we would love Christ. In fact, we are called to seek out those most in need of help – the poor, the sick (which might even include mentally ill), the prisoners (which means those who have committed crimes) and the stranger – the foreigner among us – and to serve them as if they are Christ our Lord.

To serve people in this way is more than just giving money for an outreach project or giving away clothes to the Community Store (although that’s part of service.) If we truly see and serve Christ in all persons, that means we form a relationship with them – that we care enough about this poor, badly clothed and sick foreigner that we get to know him – that we care enough about this woman in prison for killing another human being or stealing from a merchant that we get to know her. In forming that relationship, we serve that individual and we meet their needs, not as a person who feels superior to them because but as a servant to Christ the King.

John Chrysostom, a theologian and pastor in the 4th century explains our responsibility to serve others as citizens in the Kingdom of the Good Shepherd using an analogy of a safe harbor. He wrote "The almsgiver is a harbour for those in necessity: a harbour receives all who have encountered shipwreck, and frees them from danger; whether they are bad or good. … It escorts them into his own shelter. So you likewise, when you see on earth the man who has encountered the shipwreck of poverty, do not judge him, do not seek an account of his life, but free him from his misfortune."

Jesus doesn’t call us to judge why it is this person has suffered difficulties. Jesus doesn’t call us to look at this person to decide they aren’t deserving. Jesus calls us to help this person, whatever their circumstances, as if they were Christ Himself because, after all, this person is created in God’s image and has Christ in them.

After all, Jesus the King of all heaven saw goodness in us. Jesus the King of heaven gave up everything He had to help us even though compared to him we all are rather motley sinners. As disciples of Christ the King, we can do nothing less.

Sebastian Junger is author of *The Perfect Storm* and *A Death in Belmont*. Long before he became a famous writer, however, he decided to hitchhike his way across the country as an interesting experience. The following story occurred while he was making his way through the aftermath of a blizzard in Gillette, Wyoming. Here it is in his own words:

After two or three hours I saw a man working his way toward me along the on-ramp from town. He wore filthy canvas coveralls and carried a black lunchbox, and as he got closer I could see that his hair was matted in a way that occurs only after months on the skids. I put my hand on the pepper spray in my pocket and turned to face him.

"You been out here long?" he asked. I nodded.

"Where you headed?"

"California."

"Warm out there."

"Yup."

"You got enough food?"

I thought about this. Clearly he didn't have any, and if I admitted that I did, he'd ask for some. That in itself wasn't a problem, but it would mean opening my backpack and revealing all my obviously expensive camping gear. I felt alone and exposed and ripe for pillage, and I just didn't want to do that. Twenty years later I still remember my answer: "I got some cheese."

"You won't make it to California with just a little cheese," he said. "You'll starve."

At first I didn't understand. What was he saying, exactly? I kept my hand on the pepper spray.

"Believe me," he said, "I know. Listen, I'm living in a car back in town, and every day I walk out to the mine to see if they need me. Today they don't, so I won't be needing this lunch of mine."

I began to sag with understanding. In his world, whatever you have in your bag is all you've got, and he knew "a little cheese" would never get me to California. "I'm fine, really," I said. "I don't need your lunch."

He shook his head and opened his box. It was a typical church meal—a bologna sandwich, an apple, and a bag of chips—and I kept protesting, but he wouldn't hear of it. I finally took his lunch and watched him walk back down the on-ramp toward town.

I learned a lot of things in college, I thought, and I learned a lot from the books on my own. I had learned things in Europe and in Mexico and in my hometown of Belmont, Massachusetts, but I had to stand out there on that frozen piece of interstate to learn true generosity from a homeless man.

When we see others, we are looking into the face of Christ – no matter if we are looking into the face of our friend, or a “respectable town leader,” a young journalist hitchhiking as Sebastian Junger was, or a homeless person. We are called to seek and serve others without judgment, as equals, in the Kingdom of Christ.