*DEVOTIONAL*

October 22 - 27

*Stewardship: Our Daily Bread*

**Monday, October 22 Matthew 6:9-13**

*“Give us today our daily bread”*

 In what is commonly referred to as “The Lord’s Prayer,” Jesus gives an example of how his disciples should pray. The prayer is offered not so much as a command to pray, but as an invitation to share in the prayer life of Jesus himself. The priorities of the prayer are in line with the Old and New Testament practice of establishing the primacy of God in national and personal life. The prayer ranges from the grand themes of God’s name, his kingdom, and his will, to the everyday themes of bread, debts, and temptations.

 The reference to bread refers to the believer’s needs, both physical and spiritual, teaching that followers of Jesus are to rely on God for all of their needs. Jesus’ wording recalls Israel’s daily reliance on God for manna in the desert. In the same way that manna was only given one day at a time, disciples are to rely on daily provision for life from God, helping them to develop a continuing, conscious dependence on him. If God cares for us today, then surely he will provide for us every day of our lives.

*Heavenly Father, I thank you for daily providing for my needs. Amen.*

**Tuesday, October 23 Proverbs 30:7-9**

*“Give me enough to satisfy my needs”*

 How much is enough? While some may answer, “Just a little bit more,” the wisdom of Proverbs tells us to pray for enough to meet our needs. How do we know how much is enough for our needs? One way to come at that question is to distinguish between our needs and our wants. God has promised to meet our real needs, but he is not a magic genie in a bottle who gives us wishes so we can have everything we want regardless of how it will affect our relationship with God or with others.

 Proverbs goes on to tell us why we should pray for enough to satisfy our needs. On the one hand, if we get more than we need we may become proud of our riches and convince ourselves that we don’t need God anymore but can take care of ourselves. On the other hand, if we don’t have what we need, we will be compelled to behave in ways that oppose God’s will in order to meet those needs. When we trust God to give us what we need, we will be content not to wrongly seek what we really don’t need.

*Help me, Lord, to know what “enough” is for me. Amen.*

**Wednesday, October 24 Psalm 49:5-13**

*“They trust in their wealth, yet they cannot ransom themselves from death”*

 The enemy need not be feared, because, having cut themselves off from God, they have no future. The only proper object of trust is God, but the wicked trust their own resources. The only proper object of boasting is God, but evil people boast essentially in themselves. In short, they view themselves as sovereign and autonomous, denying God’s claim on their lives and future. Such self-centeredness, such dependence upon one’s own resources, may give the appearance of success, but it is ultimately an illusion.

 The reason it is an illusion is that life cannot be bought, and the one unambiguous fact that this is so is death. Everybody dies, wise and foolish, rich and poor. Death thus exposes the illusion of human sovereignty, and no amount of money will enable a person to escape death. In this sense, humans and animals are alike. Although humans were given dominion over the animals (Genesis 1:28), this did not make humans into gods. Death is a reminder that human dominion is derivative of and not a replacement for God’s sovereignty.

*I place my trust in you, Lord, knowing that nothing can separate me from your love. Amen.*

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**Thursday, October 25 Psalm 49:14-20**

*“But as for me, God will redeem my life”*

 While verses 5-13 (see yesterday’s devotion) cut the wealthy and powerful down to size because they trusted in their own wealth and tried to buy life, what about those who have not placed their trust in their riches and have not sought to purchase their life? These verses maintain that there is a distinction between the future of the foolhardy, who are destined to Sheol (the place of the dead), and those who live out their trust in God. Whereas human beings cannot purchase ultimate security, God “will ransom” for the power of God is finally greater than the power of death.

 Life is not a prize to be earned or another possession to be bought. Rather, it is a gift to be received. The good news of this psalm and the Gospel is that God wills that we live, so much so that Christians profess that God has paid the price by sending Jesus Christ, “to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we have evidence that the power of God is greater than the power of death.

*I praise you, Jesus, for you paid the price that I couldn’t. Amen.*

**Friday, October 26 Luke 12:13-21**

*“Don’t be greedy”*

 A major obstacle to one’s spiritual life can be the misuse of resources. The possessions and comfort pursued by this rich fool lead him to neglect the pursuit of God. As a result, he poorly uses the resources he has received. The occasion for Jesus’ parable is a complaint by one brother against another to give him a share of the inheritance. Jesus refuses to be drawn into choosing sides, preferring instead to raise a question about greed, which can cut through relationships, especially family relationships, like a dagger.

 The man in the parable happens to have a fruitful harvest, and he must decide what to do with the overflow. He did not acquire his harvest immorally; he simply had a good year. His error has to do with how he views what has come his way. Five times in verses 17-19 he speaks of what “I” will do, as if he owns it all. Feeling no concern or responsibility for anyone else, he chooses to keep it for himself. The essence of greed is keeping the resources God brings your way for yourself.

*Teach me to share, Father, what you lovingly have given me. Amen.*

**Saturday, October 27 1 Timothy 6:6-10**

*“Godliness with contentment is great gain”*

 We all have desires. We all want things, and when we get them we want to hold on to them. There are really only three ways to deal with desire: first, we can deny our desire. This is the basis of many Eastern religions such as Buddhism which see material things as inherently evil and therefore to be rejected. Second, we can seek to fulfill every desire we can imagine. This leads to the fundamental dysfunction of our 21st century world because the unbridled quest for things inevitably requires sinful behavior.

 The third option is to control our desires. This is the Christian option. We agree with Scripture that our possessions, all of them, are truly gifts from God, and whatever he gives us is for our benefit: “You may say to yourself, ‘my power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.’ But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:17-18). And, if there is something that we desire that God does not give, that also is for our benefit, for he wants only the best for us.

*Help me to be content, Lord, with what you have given me. Amen.*