*DEVOTIONAL*

October 23 - 28

*Stewardship: God’s Arithmetic*

**Monday, October 23 Luke 6:37-42**

*“With the measure you use, it will be measured to you”*

The measure we use toward others is the measure God will use toward us. If we do not judge; he will not judge us. If we do not condemn; he will not condemn us. If we give; he will give to us in “good measure.” The picture of the good measure pressed down draws on what happened in the ancient marketplace, where a seller placed grain in a container. Then he shook the container to get the grain to level out so that he could put more grain in the measure. That is how God measures for the generous and those who give. In fact, he gives so that the cup runs over.

One reason people don’t give is because they are fearful. They feel they don’t have enough, and if they give they think they will have even less. But many have discovered that when we learn to give to God, he begins to give us “more.” This “more” he gives comes in many different forms. He gives us more wisdom in our finances, more peace in our circumstances, more contentment with what we have, more joy in our giving, and more grace to be grateful for his many blessings. He makes what we have to be enough to meet our needs.

*Help me trust you, Lord, that when I give I will always have enough. Amen.*

**Tuesday, October 24 Deuteronomy 14:22-29**

*“Set aside a tenth”*

Tithing (setting aside 10% and giving it to the Lord’s work) serves both as a gift and, more important, as an act of putting God first in our lives. It expresses the return to God of some part of what we have received from God. It reminded the people of Deuteronomy that, in harvesting the crops or counting the offspring of flocks and herds, there had occurred an act of receiving, and not simply producing. Similarly, setting aside a portion of our income for the Lord’s work is to recognize that our ability to earn money is itself a gift from God for which we show our gratitude.

Another reason our biblical text gives for tithing is that it provided a supply of food for the support of the priests and the poor of the community. They, too, like the farmers and shepherds held a place in God’s larger community, and it was essential that they, too, be provided for and that their basic needs be met. For us today who belong to a worshipping community of believers, giving so the pastors and staff of the church can be compensated, and those who need help can receive it, is as important as it was in ancient times.

*Dear God, help me to give you first place in the use of my finances. Amen.*

**Wednesday, October 25 Haggai 1:1-11**

*“Give careful thought to your ways”*

Haggai links Judah’s present hardship to misplaced priorities in their lives. This is clearly seen in the contrast between concern for their own homes and concern for God’s house. The issue here is not the amount of resources available but rather the priorities of the people. They are concerned first with themselves and their own comfort and extravagance. This message is not saying that one cannot enjoy the blessings of a home, but twenty years of inactivity at the temple site while homes were being built and beautified is a problem.

Many of us struggle with materialism, consumerism, indebtedness, concerns about our finances, or fear about what might happen in the future. Haggai is telling us that God sometimes allows cold economic winds to blow to get our attention so that we will “give careful thought to our ways” and rediscover the importance of putting God first in our lives and first in our finances. God wants us to discover afresh how living a life of giving, not just getting, leads us to true joy, lasting happiness, and inner contentment.

*I commit, Lord, to more carefully consider how I use my money. Amen.*

*DEVOTIONAL*

October 23 - 28

*Stewardship: God’s Arithmetic*

**Thursday, October 26 Matthew 19:16-22**

*“He went sadly away because he had many possessions”*

This passage does not suggest that wealth is wrong, but it does suggest that there is something about wealth that can choke off the effectiveness of the gospel and keep one from entering God’s kingdom. The rich young man sensed a lack in his life that could not be filled with his own religious efforts. Jesus knew full well the controlling issue of the rich young man’s life – it was his wealth, which provided him power, significance, and status. It had become the god of his life.

Jesus called him to exchange it for following him. The young man’s turning away is tragic, but it becomes a powerful illustration of the way we need to keep short account of what is ruling our lives. Even Christians can misplace their allegiance, so each person must be honest with himself or herself to know what is the treasure of the heart. At stake is Jesus’ place as the Savior of our life. In order to claim Jesus as Savior, each person must remove the “god” of his or her life so that Jesus alone is God.

*Show me, Lord, if there are any “gods” in my life that I need to remove. Amen.*

**Friday, October 27 Romans 12:1-2**

*“Let God transform you by changing the way you think”*

GIGO is a computer programming term that refers to “Garbage In, Garbage Out.” If you put bad information into a computer, you will get bad information out of it. Our brains are like computers. They gather and store a lot of information about thousands of things. But if we only get our information about finances and possessions from the internet, TV, movies, and other worldly sources, we will be getting “garbage in.” This will result in “garbage out” in our financial lives. We will make poor financial decisions, impulse purchases, and waste money chasing after things that really can’t bring lasting satisfaction and joy.

God has a better way. He wants us to intentionally train our brains to think his thoughts on finances, giving, and material possessions. His Word can reprogram our brains to experience his will and his ways in these important areas of our lives. Then we will break out of the financial bondage of worldly thinking about financial matters, and begin to experience God’s peace, wisdom, and guidance.

*Teach me your ways, Lord, so what I have will bring me joy. Amen.*

**Saturday, October 28 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 providing for my needs every day. Amen.*