*DEVOTIONAL*

October 15 - 20

*Stewardship: Generous Giving*

**Monday, October 15 1 Timothy 6:17-19**

*“Be rich in good deeds, and be generous and willing to share”*

 Paul had written about the dangers of loving money, but he had not addressed those who were already rich as directly as he does now. While the early church consisted mostly of people who were poor, there were some believers of wealth. They are given three specific commands: they are not to be haughty; they are to trust in God, not in their wealth; and, they are to do good by being rich in good deeds.

 One of the dangers of being wealthy is pride. Wealth brings a sense of achievement. It also grants power and privilege. In the Kingdom of God, however, there is no place for pride. Jesus said, with great compassion, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the Kingdom of God” (Luke 18:24), because wealth seemingly diminishes the necessity for faith in God. While the Bible never makes poverty into a virtue, there is a basic reality that people who must learn to trust God for their daily bread are indeed close to his Kingdom.

*Lord, you have blessed me with more than most people have in the world. In gratitude I will support the ministry of your church as we seek to further your Kingdom. Amen.*

**Tuesday, October 16 Hebrews 13:15-16**

*“Doing good and sharing . . . with such sacrifices God is pleased”*

 In verse 15, the author of Hebrews touches on one of the most powerful dynamics of the Christian life: praise. Because of all that God has done for us in his Son, Jesus Christ, we are called to be in a continual posture of praising his name. The image of a *sacrifice* of praise comes from the Jewish practice of offering animal sacrifices on the altar which, as they are burned before the Lord, sends a pleasing fragrance up to God. As our praises rise to God, he is well pleased.

 Lest we make the mistake of thinking that such verbal and worshipful praise is the completion of our witness, we are reminded that worship must not be an excuse to forget good works. Isaiah clearly coupled worship and caring for the needy (see Isaiah 1:12-20), pointing out that doing good is also a sacrifice which is pleasing to God and required by him. Good works can never be the reason for our salvation, but they are indicators of it. Without doing the good works for which we were created, there is every reason to doubt the validity of one’s claim of salvation.

*Dear Jesus, may my good works reflect your love and sacrifice for me. Amen.*

**Wednesday, October 17 James 2:14-17**

*“Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead”*

 The central theme of James is practical Christianity, and here he specifically addresses the relationship between faith and works. In the first chapter, he sets forth the proposition that we must not only be hearers of the Word, but also doers (James 1:22). The result of being merely hearers and not doers is that we deceive ourselves into believing that we are something which we are not. We consider ourselves followers of Jesus but, if we don’t do what he asks of us, then are we truly his followers? No, says James, we are not. Of course, Jesus says that, too.

 James uses a very personal illustration. If someone is without clothes or daily food, and you wish them well but you do not share with them of your material blessings in order to clothe or feed them, what kind of faith are you practicing? You are practicing a dead faith, by which James means that a faith that does not have the power to act is a faith that does not have the power to give eternal life. Good works don’t save us, but they are evidence of having been saved.

*My faith, Lord, is made evident by what I do for others in your name. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

October 15 - 20

*Stewardship: Generous Giving*

**Thursday, October 18 Deuteronomy 15:7-11**

*“Give freely”*

 The attitude of the Israelites toward the poor in their community was to be one of warmth and generosity. The requirement of generosity extends beyond the letter of the law and points to the proper attitude which is to characterize the people’s dealings with the poor. Note, however, it is not charity, in the sense of almsgiving, which is advocated here; it is a charitable attitude to be expressed by lending to the poor, a loan which is normally expected to be repaid.

 The dilemma of a potential lender is that if he makes a loan to a poor person right before the “year of release” (the canceling of debts which took place every seven years – see 15:1-6), he will not be repaid his loan. The lender might be less willing, therefore, to respond positively to a poor person’s need. The only way in which to avoid such a situation was to instill a generous attitude toward the poor, so that the lender thought first of the predicament of the poor person, and was not concerned primarily with getting his money back. By acting generously, the lender is promised that he will experience the blessing of the Lord.

*Dear God, my attitude toward those in need will be one of generosity. Amen.*

**Friday, October 19 Matthew 6:1-4**

*“When you do a good deed, do so in secret; and your Father will reward you openly”*

 Jesus tells us that even right things can be done with wrong motives. To make his point, Jesus uses one of the most important demonstrations of religious devotion in Judaism: almsgiving. He condemns ulterior motives, such as gaining praise for oneself, and he emphasizes the godly motive of service for the sake of giving glory (credit) to God.

 If our aim is to gain the world’s rewards, we can no doubt win or receive them, but in so doing we miss the eternal dimension of reward from God. That which the world rewards is of the world and that which God rewards is of the Kingdom of heaven. Persons who do good primarily for the praise of others should know that they have received their “pay” or reward in full. But when we serve for the praise of God we will receive his blessing in full. It is proper to live for the reward of a good conscience and peace with God.

*Heavenly Father, I confess how easy it is for me to give with strings attached. Help me to give out of love for you and for those who will benefit. That will be reward enough for me. Amen.*

**Saturday, October 20 Acts 4:32-37**

 *“They shared everything they had”*

 How believers view their possessions is an important aspect of Christian fellowship. Usually when we think of fellowship, we think of spiritual unity, of good relationships existing within the community, and of the sharing of good feelings towards each other. But the Christian word for fellowship, *koinonia*, means more than that. It includes the idea of partnership as well. Thus, true Christian fellowship includes the attitude “this is not my own” to what one possesses. Thus, our finances are involved in fellowship.

 Christians should not decide on their lifestyle by looking at their peers in society, but rather after looking at the needs of the believers with which they are in fellowship. A Christian may save funds over a considerable period of time to buy something or do an improvement on her house, which others may think is an essential expenditure. But then she may find that the church in which she enjoys fellowship has an urgent need that should be met, and she may decide to give her saved funds to her church. There is great freedom and joy that comes from a lifestyle that is rich in giving rather than in using one’s resources exclusively for oneself.

*I desire, Lord, to freely share with others as you lead me. Amen.*