*DEVOTIONAL*

October 29 – November 3

*Stewardship*

**Monday, October 29 Matthew 2:7-11**

*“They opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts”*

Apparently the wise men took some length of time after the birth of Christ to make it to Bethlehem. It may have been all of two years until they actually arrived and found the young child, Jesus, for we learn that Herod’s attempt to destroy Christ included all of the boy children two years and under. The reference to finding Jesus’ family in a house, and reference to a young child rather than to a babe are further indications of the elapsed time from the birth of Christ until the occasion when the magi arrived.

There is a long history of interpretation that finds symbolic significance in their gifts in accord with Jesus’ life and ministry: e.g., gold represents his kingship, incense his deity, myrrh his sacrificial death and burial. But this reads too much into the Magi’s understanding. Rather, these three gifts indicate the esteem with which the Magi revere the child and represent giving him the honor due him as King of the Jews. These gifts were likely used to providentially support the family in their flight to and stay in Egypt.

*May the use of my treasure, Lord, indicate my esteem of you. Amen.*

**Tuesday, October 30 Matthew 7:7-12**

*“Your heavenly Father gives good gifts”*

The walk with God is a walk of prayer, a life in fellowship with him. And as we pray we need to understand the kind of God to whom we are praying. It is this knowledge which undergirds our faith, for faith is not a blind wish; it is response to evidence. The more we understand God the more our faith is developed. It has been said that it is better to have a small faith in a great God than a great faith in a small God.

The threefold emphasis on prayer in this section is answered by the statement in verse 11 about the goodness of God. The comparison is made between the good deeds sinful men do for their children and the goodness of the Father toward his children in response to their prayers. A father whose son has asked him for bread will not respond with a stone, nor, when asked for fish will instead give him a serpent or an eel which are unclean and forbidden in a Jew’s diet. That is to say: a father won’t mock a son when he makes his requests. How much less will our heavenly Father do so with us.

*You, Father, are a good God who responds to my persistent prayers with good gifts. Amen.*

**Wednesday, October 31 Mark 12:41-44**

*“Jesus watched as the crowds dropped in their money”*

Leaving the inner courts of the Temple where he has been teaching, Jesus enters into the Court of Women which also houses the Treasury. Thirteen receptacles shaped like trumpets line the walls. Worshipers put coins into one group of trumpets and offerings of goods into another. As a people-watcher, Jesus observes how the people put money into the receptacles. Evidently, he notices the attitude with which they give as well as the amount of money they contribute. Do the faces of the rich show the pain of having to keep up their reputation for being generous? Does the widow look ashamed when she throws in her offering and hears only two little “pings” as her mites hit the bottom of the trumpet?

Calling his disciples around him, Jesus repeats the lesson that he has taught so many times and in so many different ways. God asks that we give him our all, not measured by the external amount but by the inner attitude of our heart. God has measured the hearts of the various givers, Jesus is saying, and has found in the widow the most generous of the bunch.

*What do you see in my heart, Jesus, when I give? Generosity or regret? Amen.*

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**Thursday, November 1 Galatians 6:9-10**

*“Do good to everyone”*

Christians sometimes become tired of doing good. Our personal feelings can get in the way of our best intention to be kind to others; there is more to be done than we can handle; there are many calls on our time and our finances; there is sometimes ingratitude among those whom we try to benefit. No wonder we can become disheartened. Paul’s words are for us when we feel weary of treating others as Jesus would have us treat them, and he encourages us not to give up but to persevere. Then, we will be ready to do good whenever we have the opportunity.

This means that we are not to limit doing good to when it is convenient; or when it will advance our own interest; or when it may contribute to our status. And it is to be done to all people. While Paul says it’s important for believers to care for each other, we are not only to do good within our church family. We are not only to do good to those with whom we are comfortable, but to all people. If we can reach and benefit someone, regardless who they are, we are to do them good. Such is Christianity.

*Help me, Lord, to be persistent in doing good to others. Amen.*

**Friday, November 2 Philippians 4:10-17**

*“You have done well to share with me”*

These verses serve as a wonderful witness to the sufficiency of Christ and the support of his people for each other. Paul speaks personally to the Christians in Philippi, expressing his love and appreciation for them. He also conveys the trust and confidence he has in the ability of Christ to care for his every need in a way nothing or nobody else can. Paul has already referred twice to the gift he has received (1:5; 2:25-30), but he waits until the end of his letter to express his thanks for the support he has received through the years from his friends.

All sorts of thoughts and emotions flood his mind and heart. How can he adequately say thanks when the gift comes from people who can’t afford it? The church in Philippi was poor and through the years, with other Macedonian churches, had given beyond their resources. How can he be a gracious receiver when his material needs and wants are so few? Paul does enough in his letter to prevent his friends from thinking he needs more, while at the same time assuring them that he rejoices in what they have given him.

*We commit ourselves, Lord, to care for each other in our church. Amen.*

**Saturday, November 3 Hebrews 6:9-12**

*“You have shown your love for God by caring for other Christians”*

Reading these words in Hebrews reminds us of Christ’s statement that those who feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and give water to the thirsty are actually ministering to him (Matthew 25:39-40). Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 9:12 also comes to mind, in which he says that two good things happen when we care for one another: the needs of others will be met, and they will give joyful thanks to God. God has saved us by grace alone, and our good works are the outflow of his salvation.

Having praised good works, the writer moves on to the matter of our faith. Just as we have been deliberate in doing good works, we need to show the same diligence in pursuing our faith. His intense desire is for Christians to come to a full assurance of hope that will see us all the way to the end without fail when hope will be brought to its full measure or complete satisfaction. In the face of opposition, it is important that every believer hold fast to this hope and not run away in retreat.

*May I grow in love for others, Lord, and may my hope grow in you. Amen.*