*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

October 8 - 13

*Stewardship: Faithful Giving*

**Monday, October 8 Matthew 6:25-34**

*“Make the kingdom of God your primary concern”*

 Jesus’ call to trust God addresses the human tendency to worry. We find it easier to feel secure with things that we can control and, when something is beyond our control, we worry. But, when we have found the greater security in God, we can trust him for our needs. Christ calls us to give up our limited securities for greater security in his grace when he uses the birds of the air to illustrate freedom from anxiety, and the lilies of the field to illustrate freedom from status-seeking.

 The basis of our trust is confidence in the King. We believe that God is the primary mover in the world, and we trust he will provide for our needs. When we are truly Kingdom members, having been born into his Kingdom by the Holy Spirit, it follows that our highest purpose is “the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.” This concentration on doing God’s will is the positive answer to worry, but it is also and primarily a direction for positive action as a lifestyle.

*God who rules heaven and earth, I commit myself to your priorities. Amen.*

**Tuesday, October 9 Deuteronomy 26:12-15**

*“I have obeyed the Lord my God”*

 The ceremony described in these verses tells of the tithe (10% of what a person had produced) that was distributed every third year among various classes of underprivileged persons. After distributing the tithe, the worshipper made a three-part declaration in the presence of God: a positive statement (verse 13), a negative statement (verse 14), and a prayer (verse 15).

 In the positive statement, the Israelite declares his fulfillment of the law. The negative statement, though no longer completely clear in its meaning, affirms that the task has been carried out properly, pointing out certain factors which, if present, would have nullified the fulfillment of the tithe law. The closing prayer both affirms the majesty of God (he lives in heaven) and the love of God (he hears the prayers of his people). It requests God’s continued blessing – continued, because the ability to give the tithe is a sign that the Israelites were already experiencing the grace of God.

*God who provides, I thank you for all you have given me by your grace. You have blessed me that I may graciously give and be a blessing to others. Amen.*

**Wednesday, October 10 Mark 14:3-9**

*“She has done a beautiful thing to me”*

 Jesus is enjoying a meal with a friend when a woman does something extravagant. By custom, she would show hospitality and honor to a distinguished dinner guest by sprinkling his head with a drop or two of nard, a pure and expensive perfume imported from India. Her gratitude to Jesus does not fit within these boundaries. Breaking the neck of the alabaster flash, she pours all the perfume over Jesus’ head.

 Most of our love is channeled through routines of duty and standard patterns of expression – and well it should be. On rare and grand occasions, however, the spontaneity of love breaks out of the everyday in a spectacular display. A child, for instance, catches a mother by surprise with a clean room or a bouquet of dandelions. Mom’s typical reaction is, “What have you done wrong?” The child answers, “Nothing, this time. I just want to say I love you.” The woman didn’t have to break the flask and pour the perfume over Jesus. But, when ordinary acts do not suffice to express one’s feelings, an extraordinary show of love is in order.

*Jesus, you have saved me from my sin and I love you with all my heart. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

October 8 - 13

*Stewardship: Faithful Giving*

**Thursday, October 11 1 Chronicles 29:1-9**

*“They had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord”*

 David is King and God has made it clear that his son, Solomon, will succeed David. Given his son’s youth and inexperience, David urges the people to fully support Solomon and to demonstrate that support by giving of their material resources to the temple building fund so that Solomon will have all he needs to fulfill God’s command that he construct the Lord’s house. A key theme of David’s speech is the voluntary nature of the enterprise, giving gifts that are not required but prompted by a willing heart. Thus, the giver rather than the gift itself is what is being offered to God. The issue is not the amassing of great mounds of wealth, but the pouring of themselves as God’s people into a project that will become a place of worship of God.

 The response to David’s speech is a charitable attitude. It is often the case that generosity needs an example, and first David and then the leaders of the people provide that example. The open-handed giving of Israel’s leaders serves as an inducement for a similar response on the part of the people.

*Heavenly Father, may I honor you with my material goods. Amen.*

**Friday, October 12 Nehemiah 9:38 – 10:29**

*“They solemnly promised to carefully follow all the commands of the Lord”*

 The people of God enter into a voluntary and binding promise to be faithful to God. The promise is confirmed by putting it in writing and sealing it as a guarantee of its authenticity. The author gives us a list of priestly and Levitical names, suggesting that each person signing the document did so by means of his personal seal. The number of people who participate in the promise is then expanded to show that it was entered into by the whole community of those who were faithful to God.

 As well as swearing to their intention with “an oath,” the people reinforced their words by entering into “a curse.” This was probably the ritual enactment of some form of judgment which they accepted would justly fall upon them if they disobeyed their commitment to be faithful to God’s commands. The particulars of what they promised are articulated in the remainder of the chapter.

*Faithful God, you have always been true to me. I promise this day to be true to you by faithfully following your will in my life. Amen.*

**Saturday, October 13 2 Chronicles 31:2-10**

 *“The Lord has blessed his people”*

 In this passage we see how a faithful and generous king prompts similar generosity in the population. Wicked king Ahaz had closed God’s temple, but good king Hezekiah opens it back up and reinstates the system of tithes and offerings designed to both worship God and financially underwrite the ministry of the priests and Levites. The Old Testament is unapologetic about the daily provisions secured for the priests and Levites who were to live on a portion of those offerings. This enabled them to devote themselves to the study and teaching of the law of the Lord.

 The regular giving of the tithes and offerings is linked to the vitality of worship. The response to the king’s command to bring the first fruits of the produce of the field and tithe of the herds and flocks is overwhelming. These actions signify the genuineness of the people’s love for God and their sorrow for how that love had been forgotten under Ahaz. They recognized how much the Lord had blessed them, and their response was to generously bless the Lord with their gifts.

*I love you, Lord, and I bless you with all I am and all I have. Amen.*