*DEVOTIONAL*

October 14 - 19

*Stewardship: We Give – God Blesses*

**Monday, October 14 John 6:1-13**

*“They all ate until they were full”*

 Jesus has been healing the sick and performing other miracles; huge crowds have begun to follow him. Although Jesus seems to want to have a secluded and private conversation with his disciples, his whereabouts soon become known and a great crowd of people find him. Seeing them, Jesus asks his disciples where they can buy bread to feed all the people. They inform Jesus there is no way they have enough money to buy food for the now thousands of people who have come to see Jesus.

 Then Andrew speaks up and says that although a small boy has volunteered his lunch of five barley loaves and two fish, what good can that possibly do? Jesus takes the boy’s meal, gives thanks for it, and passes it out. Miraculously, the loaves and fish multiply and there is more than enough for everyone. Jesus received what was offered, although it seemed woefully inadequate, and used it to meet the needs of the people. So it is with us: we give God what we have, even if it doesn’t look like much, and he will use it to bless others.

*Heavenly Father, little can become much when you are involved with it. Amen.*

**Tuesday, October 15 Luke 10:38-42**

*“There is really only one thing worth being concerned about”*

 What are you concerned about today? What has your attention? School, work, sports, relationships, finances, family? There are so many things that can flood our minds and fill our days with anxiety and worry. Martha is too focused on her concerns. She is so busy being gracious and polite and a good hostess that she has no time to be with the Lord.

 John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim’s Progress,* said: “He who runs from God in the morning will scarcely find him the rest of the day.” Most people don’t spend time with God when they wake up in the morning because they have started their day so concerned about the many things they feel they have to get done. They enter their day with anxious hearts, troubled minds, stress in their bodies, and pain on their faces. Instead, like Mary, we need to spend time with the Lord. Make it a priority every morning to read God’s Word and pray. The Lord promises to give us the strength, guidance, and wisdom we need to handle the challenges we face each day.

*Help me, Lord, to turn to you and learn from you every day. Amen.*

**Wednesday, October 16 Proverbs 30:7-9**

*“Give me enough to satisfy my needs”*

 How much is enough? While many will answer, “Just a little bit more,” the wisdom of Proverbs tells us to pray for enough to satisfy 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 three wishes so we can have everything we want regardless of how it will affect our relationship with him and 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 and my circumstances. Amen.*

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**Thursday, October 17 Matthew 10:37-39**

*“If you give up your life for me, you will find it”*

 Giving rightful place to family presumes giving obedience first to God, which will then enable a person to honor appropriately one’s father and mother, sons and daughters. Jesus’ statement about family is in line with his call to give priority to himself above all else, even one’s dearest loved ones. To take up one’s cross is a metaphor that means to take up God’s will for one’s life, in the same way that the cross was the Father’s will for the Son’s life. Taking up God’s plan for one’s life will result in gaining true life as Jesus’ disciple.

 Jesus is talking about our relationship to himself: (1) to be worthy of Christ we are to put him first in all family relations; (2) to be worthy of Christ we are to take up his cross and identify with him; (3) to be worthy of Christ we are to choose him and his life rather than selfishly trying to preserve our own way of life. When the *Titanic* sank in 1912, in the office of the Cunard Line in New York City there was a board listing names of passengers in two columns headed “saved” and “lost.” In the end, that’s what it will come down to.

*I give up the things of this world, Lord, so I may gain eternity with you. Amen.*

**Friday, October 18 Exodus 35:4-24**

*“Everyone who is willing is to bring to the Lord an offering”*

 God has commanded an offering to gather materials for the tabernacle (the portable tent in which the Ark containing the Ten Commandments will be housed). The tabernacle is to be made out of the best that Israel can provide. The offering is to be brought by those of “generous heart” meaning the offering is spontaneous and unrequired. Further, it is to come from what the people have. Thus, one person who has only a little can give as generously as the person who has much, for each gives with a joyful heart out of what they have.

 Not only are materials to be given. Competent personnel are also needed to do the required work of building the tabernacle. God doesn’t just use the skills of trained spiritual leaders. He also calls forth the talents that we use in other areas of life. God invites each of us to determine what he has provided in our lives. We can then generously share from what we have (our time, talents, and treasure) to honor God and help advance his work in our church, community, and world.

*May I clearly see what you have given me, Lord, and generously share it. Amen.*

**Saturday, October 19 Leviticus 27:30-33**

*“One tenth belongs to the Lord and must be set apart to him as holy”*

 There is both a moral and a legal aspect to the idea of the tithe. The moral aspect is that believers are urged to set aside to God a fixed proportion of their income. The legal aspect is the precise amount of one-tenth. The moral principle is articulated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:2, “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with [one’s] income.” But how much? What is the “correct” percentage?

 The average minimal giving in the Old Testament was a tenth, but the New Testament answers with another formula: “See that you also excel in this grace of giving . . . For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:7, 9). Perhaps we should consider not how little but how much we can give, seeing how richly blessed we are in Christ. A popular quote about giving says, “Give God what’s right, not what’s left.” Setting up a plan and starting the practice of being a faithful giver will allow you to give to God what’s right, not what’s left.

*Show me, Lord, what you desire me to give regularly to your church. Amen.*