*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 2- 7

Follow Christ’s Teaching

**Monday, November 2 Matthew 7:24-27**

*“Wise or foolish living?”*

Jesus was a good speaker. His sermons moved to a conclusion that called for action. The choice is now with the hearers; having heard, they will or they will not do his will. The illustration Jesus uses from building came from his own knowledge of carpentry, for he had done such work with his parents. It was relevant in his land, for there were many valleys which were dry gulleys in summer but which, during the rains, became filled with torrents of rushing water. But above all, the illustration is appropriate to the nature of Christian discipleship, for we are building the character and spiritual achievements of the godly life. Such building calls for a good and sure foundation and this was exactly what Jesus was providing.

Jesus gives special emphasis to the identification of his words with himself, and there is no surer foundation other than the King. One cannot share the meaning or fellowship of the Kingdom without being personally related to the King. The Kingdom is happening wherever the King is ruling, and he is ruling in us when we do what he asks of us.

*We have listened, Lord, and now we obey. Amen.*

**Tuesday, November 3 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.*

**Wednesday, November 4 Luke 16:19-31**

*“There was a certain rich man . . .”*

The Pharisees thought they were entitled. They had the strange idea that their money was deserved, a sign that they were blessed by God, whereas poverty was the result of God’s curse. Jesus clearly disagrees and tells the parable to make his point. The larger context for the parable is the biblical principle of stewardship which teaches that we are all stewards of what we have, and we are to use it to bless others, to bring them health and hope and joy.

The parable suggests that if you have the resources to help and choose not to do so, you are judged. And the poor are judged as well. The poor are to be stewards of what they have as much as the rich and middle class. The parable also points to the fact that arrogance often accompanies wealth. The rich man seems to arrogantly assume that even in hell he can still summon service. And, his seeming concern for his brothers is a form of self-justification: “If I had had more understanding, I would have acted differently.” Jesus makes it clear he had enough understanding and yet missed God’s truth.

*Thank you, Lord, for what I have. Help me to use it to bless others. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 2- 7

Follow Christ’s Teaching

**Thursday, November 5 Matthew 25:14-30**

*“The servant who did nothing”*

This parable focuses primarily upon the servant who did nothing with what he had been given. The title “talents” is unfortunate, in that in our language we use the word “talent” to refer to natural aptitudes or abilities that people have. The talent in this story was a weight, and its value depended on whether the object weighed was copper, silver, or gold. It would be best to interpret the talents as opportunities to use what God has entrusted to us to further his Kingdom. In the parable each of the men is given opportunity according to ability and is expected to serve faithfully. This is a parable on responsibility.

The men who had received five and two talents respectively invested what they had been entrusted with. Inherent in investment is a certain amount of risk for one cannot know with certainty whether the investment will have a favorable return. But, while the first two servants were willing to risk on behalf of their master, the third servant thought only of himself and his security, risking nothing and achieving nothing. For this reason, he was deemed unfaithful.

*I will be faithful in giving, Lord, even when I don’t know the outcome. Amen.*

**Friday, November 6 Luke 12:13-21**

*“Don’t be greedy”*

A major obstacle to one’s spiritual life can be the misuse of resources. The possessions and comfort pursued by this rich fool lead him to neglect the pursuit of God. As a result, he poorly uses the resources he has received. The occasion for Jesus’ parable is a complaint by one brother against another to give him a share of the inheritance. Jesus refuses to be drawn into choosing sides, preferring instead to raise a question about greed, which can cut through relationships, especially family relationships, like a dagger.

The man in the parable happens to have a fruitful harvest, and he must decide what to do with the overflow. He did not acquire his harvest immorally; he simply had a good year. His error has to do with how he views what has come his way. Five times in verses 17-19 he speaks of what “I” will do, as if he owns it all. Feeling no concern or responsibility for anyone else, he chooses to keep it for himself. The essence of greed is keeping the resources God brings your way for yourself.

*Teach me to share, Father, what you lovingly have given me. Amen.*

**Saturday, November 7 Matthew 6:1-4**

*“When you give to the needy”*

  Jesus showed that even right things can be done with wrong motives. He used three basic examples to make his point and in doing so selected the three most important demonstrations of religious devotion in Judaism: almsgiving, (verses 1-4), prayer (verses 5-8), and fasting (verses 16-18). In each instance Jesus condemned service with ulterior motives, for the praise of men or for selfish benefits. Christian service is for the sake of righteousness, that is, to become more like Christ. If our aim is to gain the world’s rewards, we can no doubt win or receive them, but in doing so we miss the eternal reward of Christlikeness.

“Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” implies a secrecy about deeds of kindness. The expression means that we are to avoid all scheming or planning for our own advantage. One does not give with strings attached. One gives in complete trust that the gift, given for the praise of God, will be honored by God and will lead to the blessing of a good conscience.

*When I give, Lord, may it not be for my glory but for yours. Amen.*