*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

October 10 - 15

“The Workers in the Vineyard”

**Monday, October 10 Matthew 19:16-22**

*“The rich young man”*

Addressing Jesus with a title of respect that acknowledges the help he can receive from his learning and mastery of Scripture, the young man evidently has experienced a need in his life to perform some kind of righteous deed that will assure him of having eternal life. Jesus gets the young man to focus on God alone as the Good, to whom he must come to gain eternal life. Jesus is not denying he is good or that he is equal with God, but he is trying to get the young man to see that only in understanding God as good can he discover that eternal life is a gift.

What, then, does the man lack? Jesus pinpoints the problem when he tells him to sell his possessions and give to the poor. His wealth has become his means to personal identity, power, purpose, and meaning in life. It has, in a real sense, become his god. Thus, Jesus calls him to exchange the god of wealth for following him as the one true God. The young man’s response shows that he knows that his many possessions have captivated his heart, but he is unwilling to exchange this god for Jesus.

*May nothing I have, Lord, become more important to me that you. Amen.*

**Tuesday, October 11 Matthew 19:23-30**

*“The disciples”*

Jesus uses the incident of the rich young man as an object lesson for the disciples. This man illustrates a basic principle of this life - wealth is a heady intoxicant, because it provides most of the counterfeits that fool a person into thinking he or she does not need God. The disciples are shocked at Jesus’ statement about the difficulty of wealthy people entering the kingdom of God, because wealth was often equated with the blessing of divine favor. If those who seemingly are the most blessed of God cannot be saved, then who can be?

Jesus knows that riches can keep people’s eyes off of God. But he also knows God’s operation in the lives of people and says that God can make it possible. Once Jesus has made this dramatic statement, Peter asks what’s in it for the disciples who have left everything to follow Jesus. In other words, for those who have done what the rich young man refused to do. Jesus acknowledges the rewards they will receive, but Peter’s self-seeking for rewards sets up the parable in 20:1-15, which is a subtle rebuke to that self-seeking.

*I follow you out of love for you, Lord; not in order to be rewarded. Amen.*

**Wednesday, October 12 Matthew 20:1-7**

*“The hiring of the workers”*

Jesus is giving a lesson on the activity of God’s Kingdom in the world. Jesus pictures harvest time when a landowner hired seasonal workers to help with his harvest. He went early to the marketplace, where laborers gathered, waiting for landowners to hire them. The agreed-upon sum of a denarius was a day’s wage for a laborer.

The landowner hired the first workers at the beginning of the day to work the entire day (from about 6:00am to 6:00pm). At the third hour (9:00am), the landowner needed more laborers for his abundant harvest, so he went back to the marketplace and found people still waiting for the chance to work. Families in the ancient world often went day to day, earning only enough for the food for that particular day. If they did not find work, they would not have enough to eat, so they continued to wait for someone to hire them. These laborers agreed to work for “whatever is right,” expecting most likely to receive a proportional reduction from the day’s regular denarius. It would have been the same for those hired at 12:00noon, at 3:00pm, and at 5:00pm.

*You invite me to minister in your kingdom, Lord. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

October 10 - 15

“The Workers in the Vineyard”

**Thursday, October 13 Matthew 20:8-16**

*“The workers receive their pay”*

At the end of the day when the foreman paid the wages, a shocking development unfolded. The laborers who were hired last were paid the full denarius. This built up the expectation that those who worked longer would receive a proportional increase in their wages. But no! Those who worked the entire long, hot day received the same wage as those who only worked an hour, which expectedly caused those hired first to protest that the others didn’t deserve equal treatment. With a measure of gentleness, the landowner addresses their protest by encouraging them to be grateful for what they received.

If a disciple’s eyes are fixed on earthly, material treasure as his or her value, personal significance, and earthly security, then he or she will become greedy and lack charity toward others. The paradoxical statement about the first and the last (19:30; 20:16) declares that those who serve in order to receive a reward will be last, and those who serve in order to respond in obedience to Jesus’ summons will be first.

*May my motivation for service be love, Lord; not what I may gain. Amen.*

**Friday, October 14 Matthew 20:17-19**

*“Jesus’ third prediction of his death”*

Immediately following his recording of Jesus’ parable of the workers in the vineyard, Luke includes yet another of Jesus’ predictions of his death. If there was ever an “all-day” worker in God’s vineyard, it was Jesus; and, if there was ever one who deserved more reward for his service than any other, it was Jesus. Yet, he was the One who would die for all the “part-time” workers, for those whose service paled in comparison to his.

Jesus and the disciples travel from Galilee to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. Evidently a large contingent accompanies Jesus, including the women disciples who ministered to Jesus’ needs and who will witness the crucifixion. With the fateful event in Jerusalem just weeks away, Jesus takes aside the Twelve to give them another prediction of his impending betrayal. This is the third of four predictions of his arrest and crucifixion, but the drama is heightened by the first reference to Jerusalem, the first mention of the religious leaders’ condemnation of Jesus to death, and the first mention of the Gentiles, who will carry out the execution.

*It is God’s plan, Lord, that you die for me, unworthy though I am. Amen.*

**Saturday, October 15 Matthew 20:20-28**

*“Not to be served but to serve others”*

Jesus reveals in the conversation with the sons of Zebedee and their mother that servanthood and gratitude must be two primary motivations for the community of disciples. The sons are eager to endure any kind of sacrifice as long as they will be rewarded with personal prominence in the kingdom. But, this kind of incentive will tear apart the unity of the disciples by producing manipulation and competition.

We can understand the motivation of the brothers and their mother, because this is the way of the world that we all know so well. But when servanthood is linked with gratitude in understanding the gift of the position that we hold as members of the kingdom of God, we can take our eyes off ourselves. There will never be any higher position for us, because we are all equal brothers and sisters of one Father and all equal disciples of one Teacher and Master who himself did not live in the Kingdom of his Father in order to be served, but that he might give his life in service to others.

*In dying on the cross, Lord, you served me in a way none other can. Amen.*