*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

October 17 - 22

“The Talents”

**Monday, October 17 Matthew 25:14-18**

*“He entrusted his money to them”*

 Some people focus so much on Jesus’ return in glory that they exhibit little concern to be prepared now. Faithful discipleship to Christ entails readiness. Jesus’ sayings in the parable of the three servants and the scene of judgment that follows are addressed to his disciples, then and now, who are called to be urgently prepared for a sudden, unexpected return of the Lord, but who must also plan for an extended absence and make profitable use of their giftedness in the meantime. When he returns, Jesus will expect that his followers have been productive on behalf of the kingdom of heaven, using well what God has given them for God’s glory.

 Wealthy landowners often entrusted their property and affairs to trustworthy servants when they went away on business or for personal dealings. The landowner is portrayed here as wealthy, for he has liquid disposability of at least eight talents of silver (a talent was equivalent to 75 pounds). In terms of today’s value, the landowner disperses approximately $1,970,000 to the three servants.

*You bless me, Lord, and you expect me to use those blessings for your glory. Amen.*

**Tuesday, October 18 Matthew 25:19-23**

*“The good and faithful servants”*

 The silver dispersed by the homeowner apparently symbolizes personal giftedness or abilities. The first and second servant immediately make effective use of their entrusted amounts, probably setting up some kind of business and making a capital return on the original investment that equals the original five and two talents. The third servant simply digs a hole, into which he places the master’s one talent.

 After a long interval, the master returns and settles accounts with them. He exclaims to the first two servants: “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” The identical statement of praise to both servants indicates that the point of the parable is not on the total amount earned but on faithful responsibility in living up to one’s potential and giftedness. The amount of giftedness bestowed may differ, but both servants receive the identical joy in the presence of their master.

*You rejoice, Lord, when I use well what you have given me. Amen.*

**Wednesday, October 19 Matthew 25:24-27**

*“The wicked and lazy servant”*

 In contrast to the first two servants, the third comes to the master with a different accounting of the one talent given to him: He has hidden it in the ground. The master replies, “You wicked and lazy servant!” The wickedness of the third servant primarily stems from his attitude about his master, which in turn has led to laziness and bad stewardship. The way he conceives of him (“you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed”) causes him to fear and then to hide away the talent and not seek to advance the master’s capital.

 The servant’s misperception of the master has produced alienation, mistrust, fear, and then personal apathy. Had he truly loved his master, he would not have attempted to place the blame on him for his decision but would have operated out of love. Perhaps he was afraid of losing the master’s money through poor investments, but at the very least he could have shown his loyalty to his master by looking for a safe way to earn a little interest on his money.

*I love you, Lord, and I will not be lazy in doing your will. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

October 17 - 22

“The Talents”

**Thursday, October 20 Matthew 25:28-30**

*“Abundance and punishment”*

 In a surprising twist to the story, the master declares that the talent is to be taken from the wicked servant and given to the one who has ten and who has proven his industriousness. Wise and conscientious use of one’s God-given abilities is a responsibility that accompanies a right relationship with God.

 But the punishment is not simply taking away the talent from the wicked servant, now called “worthless.” The master instructs that he should be thrown “outside, into the darkness.” The contrast in the parable is between those whose eternal destiny is salvation and those whose eternal destiny is damnation. The first two servants are true disciples; the third is not. A person’s faithfulness is evidence as to whether he or she is truly one of Jesus’ own. As the disciples await the return of the Son of Man, they must teach that industriousness of discipleship is a testimony of one’s love and trust of Jesus as Lord. But a disciple’s resolve should not come from a self-advancing motivation; it should be demonstrated in serving others as Jesus did.

*In response to you, Lord, I will put your gifts to me to good use. Amen.*

**Friday, October 21 Matthew 25:31-40**

*“The sheep at his right hand”*

 The scene switches now to the glorious future coming of the Son of Man. Before him all the people of the world will be gathered, and he will separate them into two groups. To the sheep on his right he declares blessing and Kingdom inheritance. The transitional “for” in verse 35 introduces the explanation why the sheep receive the inheritance: it is the reward for caring for Jesus’ physical needs.

 There is a surprised reaction from those who are rewarded. Having taken his words literally, they can recall no time when they have done this for the King. Such surprise indicates that these were not intentional meritorious acts to gain access to the kingdom. Rather, these acts of mercy are evidences that the sheep belong to the kingdom. In caring for the needs of “the least” of these brothers and sisters of Jesus, they have served Jesus. Here, Jesus is affirming that Christians are to care for one another, and especially the least among them. It is important to note that this does not absolve a general mercy that Christians must demonstrate toward all in need.

*In caring for each other in our church family, Lord, we are caring for you. Amen.*

**Saturday, October 22 Matthew 25:41-46**

*“The goats at his left hand”*

 Jesus now addresses those on his left, the “goats,” in almost the same wording he used to commend the “sheep” on his right, except that the goats are condemned because they have not demonstrated mercy to Jesus in his need. The goats respond similarly to the way that the sheep have. Jesus replies in the same way as he has to the sheep, except the goats have *not* acted in behalf of “the least.” Jesus omits the reference to “of these brothers and sisters of mine,” but we should assume that he intends this as a shortened reference.

 The goats are just as surprised as the sheep. They are not condemned to eternal punishment for some externally heinous sin but for their failure to do the right thing. Such “sins of omission” are worthy of eternal damnation because they are evidence that a person has not been made righteous by association with the kingdom of God. Righteous acts spring from a heart transformed by the Spirit of God while unrighteous acts, even of omission, indicate a heart lacking the Spirit’s work.

*I will be held accountable by you, Lord, for what I have done in this life. Amen.*