

AWAKEN TO THANKSGIVING

Sunday, November 30th 2014

thanksgiving: expressing a good feeling that you have toward someone who has helped you, given something to you, etc.

Matthew 20:1-16 (NIV)

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

20 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay them a denarius^[a] for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

³ “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴ He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ ⁵ So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. ⁶ About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

⁷ “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

⁸ “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

⁹ “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰ So when those came who were hired first,

they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹² ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

*¹³ “But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius?’ ¹⁴ Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵ Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? **Or are you envious because I am generous?**’*

*¹⁶ “**So the last will be first, and the first will be last.**”*

What does it mean that “the last will be first, and the first will be last?”
(Matthew 19, Mark 10, Luke 13)

The direct object of this parable seems to be, to show that though the Jews were first called into the vineyard, at length the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, and they should be admitted to equal privileges and advantages with the Jews. The parable may also be applied more generally, and shows, 1. That God is debtor to no one. 2. That many who begin last, and promise little in man’s eyes, sometimes, by the blessing of God, arrive at a great deal of knowledge, grace, and usefulness. 3. That the reward will be given to the saints, but not according to the time of their conversion.

Until we are hired into the service of God, we are standing idle: a sinful state, really. The market-place is the world, and from that we are called by the gospel. Come, come from this market-place. Those that are

heaven-bound are not idle but rather diligent. Some were sent into the vineyard at the eleventh hour; but nobody had hired them before. In the same way, the Gentiles came in at the eleventh hour; the gospel had not yet been preached to them. Those that have had the gospel offered to them at the third or sixth hour, and refused it, cannot say at the eleventh hour, “no man has hired us.” Therefore, not to discourage any, but to AWAKEN ALL, we must remember that “today is the Day of Salvation;” (2 Corinthians 6:2) NOW is the time to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

The riches of this Divine grace are loudly murmured at, both among proud Pharisees and nominal Christians alike. In our flesh we are all prone to think that WE have too LITTLE, and OTHERS have too MUCH of the tokens of God's favor; and that WE do too MUCH, and OTHERS do too LITTLE in the work of God. **BUT if God gives grace to others, it is kindness to them, and no injustice to us.** (Example: How do you react when you hear about other people going on vacation? When you hear about someone else getting a promotion or someone else drives up in a new car?) Why are we immediately discontent or even upset upon hearing this news? Is it because we just really really care about everyone so much that we want to make sure that they are making the right financial decisions in every matter and so we're just looking out for our brother or sister in the Lord? Haha. Or is it maybe because we can easily become envious of God's generosity? (verse 15)

Worldly-minded people have reached an agreement with God for their penny in THIS world; and choose their portion in THIS life. Obedient believers, however, agree with God for their penny in the OTHER world, and must remember this, more often than not. After all, HEAVEN IS

OUR HOME! It's SO HARD to remember this reality, especially in this Season, but we must! God punishes no one more than they deserve, and rewards every service done for him. Therefore, God does no wrong to any, by showing extraordinary grace to some.

To paraphrase one of our church's very own young philosophers, who penned these words recently using the all-powerful Facebook: "only in America would you see people stop to say thanks one day and then turn around and shove their way to the front of the shopping line the next." Now, whether or not it's true that this phenomenon only happens in America, I will leave up for debate but what is true is that it certainly DOES happen here and it's something we're all too familiar with. Why? Why do we do this to ourselves? It would almost be comical if it didn't result in real hurt and pain caused to others. It can become just plain sad. (Disclaimer: before anyone gets offended, I'm not saying that if you went shopping on Black Friday you're a sinner and you need to come to the altar and get saved...actually, yes I am...just kidding, I'm not. 😊 But it SHOULD cause us to think about the things that really matter during the Holidays.)

Finally, let's look at the nature of envy. Envy is like an evil eye, (no, not like the evil eye our mothers can give us 😊) which is displeased at the good of others, and desires their hurt. It is a heartache to ourselves, displeasing to God, and hurtful to our neighbors. It is a sin without pleasure, profit or honor. Let us sacrifice every proud claim, and receive salvation exactly as it comes, as a free gift. Instead of being envious or holding a grudge, let's rejoice and praise God for his mercy to others as well as to ourselves.

1 Samuel 16:7 says, “The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

Where is your heart today? Is it stuck in a place of conflict with your mind and what you know to be right, or are you submitting your whole self to God and allowing Him to continually transform you, even your very heart? Is it in a place of gratitude or of envy? Is it filled to overflowing with joy, or is it bogged down with regret? Do you feel like you can share it with others or is it locked away in isolation behind walls of insecurity and shame? Again, people look at the outward appearance but God, your God, He looks at your heart.

It's my deepest desire that we would walk out of this place today with open hearts, guarded still yes, but open to what God wants to do to change them and conform us to be more like His Son, Jesus Christ. It is also my prayer that each of us, no matter what kind of baggage we came in here carrying, could offer our heart to the only one who is really worthy of our THANKSGIVING. Who is worthy of our praise and our worship and our time and our energy and our finances and our families...He is WORTHY OF IT ALL and we ought to be SO THANKFUL to our Lord and Savior JESUS CHRIST!

I love celebrating our various Holidays on one specific day of the year, and I pray that I will always have that freedom, but something I love even more is doing my best to live out the purpose of those Holidays every moment of every day. Jesus is

worthy of our thanksgiving every day of the week and every month of the year.

For if:

thanksgiving: expressing a good feeling that you have toward someone who has helped you, given something to you, etc.

Then, how much should we be thankful to the One who gave it all?!

Listen to the lyrics of this song:

"How Can It Be" by Lauren Daigle

Verse 1:

I am guilty
Ashamed of what I've done, what I've become
These hands are dirty
I dare not lift them up to the Holy one

Chorus:

You plead my cause
You right my wrongs
You break my chains
You overcome
You gave Your life
To give me mine
You say that I am free

How can it be
How can it be

Verse 2:

I've been hiding
Afraid I've let you down, inside I doubt
That You still love me
But in Your eyes there's only grace now

Bridge:

Though I fall, You can make me new
From this death I will rise with You
Oh the grace reaching out for me
How can it be
How can it be

I'm so thankful for God's Grace. I'm not sure anyone can really accurately define "grace" but the more and more I think about it, it seems like "Jesus" would be a good definition. It was Grace that hung on a cross for you and for me over 2,000 years ago, it's Grace that fights my battles for me day in and day out and it's Grace that will never leave me where I'm at YET accepts me just as I am. Haha, it doesn't make a whole lot of earthly sense, does it?! 😊 I'm so thankful for God's Amazing Grace!

Let's Pray