

10/12/2009

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Lord Jesus Christ, whose grace always precedes and follows us, help us to forsake all trust in earthly gain and to find in You our heavenly treasure; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Amos 5: 6–7, 10–15

(Hate evil, love good; act with justice and fairness.)

6 Seek the LORD and live, or he will sweep through the house of Joseph like a fire; it will devour, and Bethel will have no one to quench it. 7 You who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground . . .

10 you hate the one who reproves in court and despise him who tells the truth. 11 You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. 12 For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts. 13 Therefore the prudent man keeps quiet in such times, for the times are evil. 14 Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the LORD God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. 15 Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.

THE EPISTLE LESSON Hebrews 3:12–19 (*We share in Christ if we hold fast to the end.*)

12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. 14 We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. 15 As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."

16 Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? 17 And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? 18 And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? 19 So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

THE GOSPEL LESSON Mark 10:17–22 (*What must I do to inherit eternal life?*)

17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good-- except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'"

20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in

heaven. Then come, follow me."

22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

THE SERMON "Discipleship – Eternal things before Earthly things"

Mark

10

INTRO - We have had a congregational devotional project for the last year and a half to read the Bible in two years in the "Today's Light Bible." I don't know if you saw the devotion for Thursday's reading. After reading 1 Thessalonians 1, which prepares people properly not only to live in this world, but to be ready for heaven, the devotional writer quoted a somewhat disparaging parable. Have you ever heard this phrase? "He's too heavenly-minded to be any earthly good?" She suggested the opposite could also be true, "She's too earthly-minded to be any heavenly good."

I. I don't know if you see that struggle in our lesson for today, but finding that balance is the fight going on in the life of the man who talks to Jesus.

A. The man comes to Jesus and asks him, **"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"**

1. The man truly wanted eternal life. But he had some issues that Jesus could see.

2. First, he didn't know that heaven is a gift of God.

A. Jesus had to tell him **"No one is good-- except God alone.**

B. But still the man thought he had kept the commandments. **20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."**

3. So, in love, Jesus tries to show the man His heart, which trusts himself, what He can do, and trusts his possessions in this life. **"One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."**

4. But, the man could not do it. He may have wanted eternal life, but he loved the things of this life even more. **22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.** He was so earthly minded, he was going to miss heaven unless God got His attention to His love and mercy.

B. Jesus' goal for the man was the blessings of heaven.

1. He said, if the man's heart had allowed him to give everything to the poor, if the man had followed Jesus, **you will have treasure in heaven.**

2. God wants us to not be so earthly minded, we can't be any "heavenly good."

3. While this world is the present reality, eternal life is the ultimate reality.

4. You know what Jesus says

A. In Matthew 6:19 Jesus says, **Matthew 6:19-21 19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.** The treasures of heaven last, compared to the treasures of this life.

B. Jesus also tells his disciples in Mark 8, **Mark 8:36-37 36 What**

good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Why lose the eternal to keep what is perishing?

C. What are the treasures of heaven?

1. 1 Corinthians 13:13 says **And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.**

2. Instead of working for earthly wealth, or fame, or power - which can steal the gift of eternal life in heaven from us, we do ourselves well to build faith in Jesus, and hope our eternal future, and love in our lives for God and others.

II. Have you ever heard the description of a courtship that, "SHE let him chase her until SHE caught him."? In many ways that is how God works.

A. This man seems to be pursuing heaven, and maybe also God, though he doesn't say that.

B. But, do you see how gentle Jesus is with this fragile man?

1. Knowing the man has the wrong idea about heaven, "What must I do?" Jesus tries to correct His wrong thinking. Heaven comes through what God does for us in Jesus.

2. Knowing the man is trusting himself Jesus directs the man to his only hope. After putting aside the earthly treasures, the man was to, **Then come, follow me."**

C. We are talking discipleship these weeks in October. A disciple is a follower of Jesus.

1. Do you see how this man's wealth got in the way of following Jesus?

2. Do you see how our possessions can get in the way?

3. But, when we know that Jesus gave up everything to save us, His love catches our attention. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says, **9 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.**

4. So a disciple seeks to follow Jesus, and seeks to serve him in faith, hope and love.

III. The other point we made about disciples is that their lives make a difference. When we store up treasures in heaven, that prepares us to bring the blessings of these treasures to those around us.

A. Ken Klaus told a story this week in his devotions. *There is that man in New Jersey who lives by the side of a great national highway. Recently, he was seen out in the middle of the thoroughfare. Keeping one eye on the traffic, he kept the other on a large hole which he was filling up. He had to dump, and tamp down, the contents of four five-gallon pails before he managed to have that hole filled. When a reporter asked him, "Why?" the man had a reply. He said, "Filling the hole took me only a few minutes... but I probably saved motorists hundreds, maybe thousands of dollars in repair bills. It was a job which needed to be done, and I wasn't all that busy." Are you more impressed if I tell you that man doesn't own a car?*
B. This is how it works, when we know we have the eternal treasures of heaven, the temporal treasures of this world are not that important. So, as we grow in the eternal, in the treasures of heaven, we can share faith, and hope, and

love. We can love others. We can love and serve God, because Jesus gave up the riches of heaven, for us, so we could have them!

CONCLUSION - Jesus does not call us to be too heavenly minded to be any earthly good. He certainly doesn't want us so fixed on this world that we ignore the eternal treasures. Jesus wants us knowing His love, receiving eternal treasures, so that as His disciples, we make a difference in this world.