



grow. pray. study. | daily devotional readings

November 8, 2020 "Looking In to Find True Worth"

It's a Wonderful Life!

Matthew 6:19-24

¹⁹ "Stop collecting treasures for your own benefit on earth, where moth and rust eat them and where thieves break in and steal them. ²⁰ Instead, collect treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust don't eat them and where thieves don't break in and steal them. ²¹ Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²² "The eye is the lamp of the body. Therefore, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how terrible that darkness will be! ²⁴ No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be loyal to the one and have contempt for the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

Quote from "It's a Wonderful Life"

"You've been given a great gift, George: a chance to see what the world would be like without you. ... Strange, isn't it? Each person's life touches so many other lives, and when they aren't around, it leaves an awful hole, doesn't it?" – Clarence Odbody, the Angel to George Bailey

Family Activity: Visit our [children's ministry](#) page to find links to this week's Family devotions and children's activity pages.

MONDAY 11.09.2020 | Jesus' realism about life's many hurts

Read: Psalm 147:1-5, Matthew 5:1-4

Reflect: Based on a single verse (like Psalm 147:1), some people say a "true" Christian can only feel "praise." But if we, or someone we care about, is hurting deeply, that often just deepens the despair. Psalm 147 spoke after Israel's exile in Babylon (see verse 2). And verse 3 said, not that God's people were never sad, but that God tenderly cares for the brokenhearted and wounded. In the first two of his famous "Beatitudes" (from the Latin *beatus*, "blessed") Jesus' named hopelessness and grief as part of human life. But he offered God's good news to the hopeless and grieving.

- Israel's exile in Babylon left scattered people and a ruined Jerusalem. "Against all the evidence the psalm declares that Yahweh is the builder of Jerusalem and the gatherer of exiles, the healer of broken spirits and the nurse who bandages people's wounds....How can you believe such declarations? You can believe them on the basis of the fact that the God of whom the psalm speaks is the one who controls the stars and who cannot himself be put under control." * How easy or hard do you find it to trust that the universe's Creator cares about you when you hurt?

- Jesus would have used the Aramaic phrase “O, the blessedness of....” in the Beatitudes. It meant much more than circumstance-based human happiness. Scholar William Barclay wrote, “No one,’ said Jesus, ‘will take your joy from you’ (John 16:22). The beatitudes speak of that joy which seeks us through our pain, that joy which sorrow and loss, and pain and grief, are powerless to touch, that joy which shines through tears, and which nothing in life or death can take away.” ** When, if ever, has God given you that deep inner trust? How can you daily build a bond with God that makes that good news an unshakeable part of your life?

Pray: Lord Jesus, I want the kind of rock-solid blessedness you offer me. Shape my heart to value what you value, to rejoice in the eternal life you give. Amen.

* John Goldingay, *Psalms for Everyone, Part 2: Psalms 73–150*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014, p. 221.

** William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Matthew—Volume 1 Chapters 1–10 (Revised Edition)*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, p. 89.

If you or someone you care about has suicidal feelings, please seek help.

[1-800-SUICIDE](#)

1-800-784-2433



[National Suicide](#)

[Hotline & Chat](#)



[1-800-273-TALK](#)

1-800-273-8255



[National Suicide Prevention](#)

[Lifeline & Chat](#)

TUESDAY 11.10.2020 | Willing to share

Read: 1 Kings 17:8-16

Reflect: Israel was having a terrible drought. For the poor, like the widow in today's story, this time of crop failure was not just a nuisance, but a disaster. Then Elijah the prophet asked her to share her food! But the request came with a promise, and she trusted that promise and gave the prophet food and shelter. God made the little she had more than enough for three people!

- The widow was resigned to starvation. Yet based only on God's promise, she shared her meager amount of bread. God provides in usual ways (e.g. wheat grows, each new day dawns) and in unusual ways like this story. Who has conveyed the message of God's providence to you? How can you share this life-giving message with someone else?
- It is scary when our resources seem to be running out. When have you feared that you didn't have enough resources to sustain you and your family—financially, physically, emotionally, or spiritually? When have you grown and been blessed by simplifying your life to allow you to share with others who have even less than you?

Pray: Gracious God, sometimes I'm afraid of sharing what I have for fear I won't have enough left. Help me be willing to live with less so that I can share more, and trust that You will always provide for my needs. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 11.11.2020 | Jesus warns about greed

Read: Luke 12:13-21

Reflect: Jesus used this parable to get his hearers (and us) to think about how far ahead our life plans reach. For the rich man storing his large crop, the sad answer was, “Not nearly far enough.” Being obsessed with death is not healthy, but neither is denying reality. This life, and any material possessions we enjoy in it, will end. Only God can (and does) offer us eternity.

- A man asked Jesus to help him get what he saw as his fair share of an estate (verse 13). Jesus’ wry story said that, when we die, the things we fight so hard for do us no more good. We are captive to what our earth-bound senses take in, unless we “see” beyond created things to the Creator. How do you focus on the riches that last for eternity?
- Jesus ended by speaking sadly of “those who hoard things for themselves and aren’t rich toward God.” If it’s true, as he said, that “one’s life isn’t determined by one’s possessions” (verse 15), then what does determine the value and impact of a person’s life? What kinds of choices make a person rich toward God?

Pray: Lord Jesus, help me to change my focus so that instead of looking only at what I want and need, I gain your vision for the things that really matter, in this life and in your kingdom. Amen.

THURSDAY 11.12.2020 | Jesus calls us to live generously

Read: Luke 12:33-34, 48; Acts 20:35

Reflect: Our culture often acts as though “mine” is one of the most priceless English words. Jesus always challenged that all-too-human possessiveness. When we loosen our grasp, he said, we can live lighter lives free of worry and stress. Investing our treasure, time and talent in God’s mission to uplift and redeem the whole world is, according to Jesus, the one truly safe investment we can make.

- In verse 34, Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” True security and satisfaction, he taught, came from seeking God first, not from externals like food, clothing, or material possessions. How does Jesus’ teaching challenge the ways you’ve learned to think and act about the level of security and satisfaction “stuff” can bring you?
- The principle in Acts 20:35, the only direct quote from Jesus not in any of the four gospels, is more often honored in words than in actions. We usually hear messages more like, “When I have received enough, then maybe I can start to [cautiously] give.” How easy or hard is it for you to be generous with the money, time or possessions you have? What wishes or fears get in the way of generosity?

Pray: Lord Jesus, when I stop to realize who you are, I realize that your whole earthly life was an act of massive generosity. Let that awareness inspire me to greater generosity in my life. Amen.

FRIDAY 11.13.2020 | Life’s true value

Read: 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Reflect: The apostle Paul saw people lose their ways from the faith when money was their life’s highest goal (cf. 1 Timothy 6:9-10). He urged Timothy to “run away” from a life that based its primary hope on finances. Instead, he called Timothy and the members of his congregation to a different view of what we today call “retirement planning.” He said to actively “do good, to be rich in the good things they do, to

be generous, and to share with others" was the best way to lay a good foundation for the future. Those choices would enable them to take hold of "what is truly life."

- So much around us, including some approaches to retirement, tries to convince us that money is the most important part of a satisfying life. As scholar N. T. Wright said, "Every advertisement, every other television program, many movies and most political manifestos are designed, by subtle and not-so-subtle ways, to make us say, 'If only I had just a bit more money, then I would be content.'" * What are the main drivers of the way you live your life? What kind of outcome to your life do you most wish to avoid? What life goal(s) are you pursuing with all your might? What steps can you take today to resist the temptation to look to mainly to money for happiness, fulfillment, and ultimate security?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for being my ultimate mentor, guide, and accountability partner. Teach me to value what you value, to take hold of what is truly life. Amen.

SATURDAY 11.14.2020 | Courage to change our priorities

Read: Matthew 19:16-31

Reflect: Jesus invited the young man in this story to have the courage to reset his priorities. The young man refused. That he went away sad suggests that he wanted to follow Jesus. That he didn't do it said there was other stuff he wanted even more. Like many people then (and now), Jesus' disciples thought material prosperity always meant God approved of a person. Jesus' statement that "it will be very hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven" shocked them. Very hard, he said, but not impossible: "All things are possible for God" (verse 26).

- This story poses a question many of us would rather not grapple with: "Which of my possessions, if any, are so precious to me that I'd choose them over Jesus?" Don't fear the question, as the young man did. Courageously wrestling through it can set you free! How will you strengthen your trust in God, and allow God to guide you in accurately valuing his gift of eternal life, and faithfully using your earthly possessions?

Pray: Generous God, help me to take a true accounting of my treasures of time, skills, talents, possessions and money. I want to be freed from the weights of worry, hurry, hoarding or fear, and to live in such a way that I use all my treasures faithfully to grow your kingdom.

Prayers for our Community:

- Linda Pennington requests prayers for both of her brothers, one of whom is recovering from a successful surgery at Mayo to treat an aortic aneurysm, and the other who has ongoing health problems and was admitted to the hospital with heart problems.
- Christine Perry requests prayers for her daughter Calli who has had an increase in her rate of transfusions and has become more immune suppressed; continued prayers for her stepdad who has been diagnosed with Thyroid cancer and will have surgery on Nov. 30; prayers for a family friend (like an aunt) who has also been diagnosed with Thyroid cancer; and prayers for three of her family members who have tested positive for Covid-19, including one cousin who is on Bpap.
- Ernie Brees asks for prayers for his 99-yr-old uncle Koran Brees, who has tested positive for Covid-19 along with many other residents in his nursing home in Corydon; prayers for him, and all the residents and staff.

- Souane Mumma requests prayers for her sister Maxine Peterson who has been battling cancer for three years, and has made the decision for hospice care; prayers for her, her children and their family as they make this transition.
- Gianni Comito requests prayers for his uncle Doug Jacobs, whose wife MaryAnne died suddenly. They had just retired and moved from Texas to Ankeny to be near family.
- Continued prayers for Justin Young's parents, both of whom have been diagnosed with cancer.
- Continued prayers for Diane Hammond's sister-in-law Lisa who has Stage IV breast cancer.
- Continued prayers for Julie Caster's dad, Lyman Rule, whose is receiving cancer treatment.
- Continued prayers for Larry Conrad, former pastor of Polk City UMC, and father of David Conrad, who is receiving cancer treatment.