

The same kind of scene is depicted in Revelation 20. In ways that we do not fully understand the Lord promises that in the life to come we will experience a sense of “reward.” The Heidelberg Catechism deals with this ever so briefly but makes what I believe to be a helpful comment, “this reward is not earned, it is a gift of grace.” (Lord’s Day 24).

The Bible is rather vague on what heavenly rewards we will experience, that is, rewards in the life after death. But that is exactly what we’d expect isn’t it? If we knew what they were, we’d think that somehow we could earn them, or perhaps even that we deserve them...and then we will have missed the point altogether. Reward is like a young child bringing home a handful of wildflowers with a smile that stretches from ear to ear. “I love you mom, I love you dad.” Reward is Jesus’ smile upon us when we meet him in heaven, when he places his hand on our head and says, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Rewards are precious gifts to us that we simply run into, we fall upon them. They come like unexpected flowers or a beautiful landscape on a spring hike. We don’t expect them, we don’t look for them. For if we did, the gift would become a task, and we’d live trying to pursue it rather than receiving it from our Father’s hand.

PRAY: Thank the Lord for his promised reward for your life of obedience and Kingdom investment.

FRIDAY APRIL 15

Read: Luke 19:20-24

Let’s consider the third servant. Here was a man who accepted the master’s gift, but not the responsibility that comes with it. A commentator by the name of John Nolland calls it a certain kind of “nominalism”... a “readiness in a general way to be identified with Jesus, but unwillingness to be answerable in any committed sense to God’s expectations that are made known to us in connection with Jesus; a preference for doing nothing rather than running the risk of doing too little.”

The servant, we read, was “afraid.” He feared the master and therefore lived with a sense of duty and obligation that was a burden rather a joyful response. His fear prevented him from joyfully and obediently “investing” his master’s gift.

Many religions in our world instill fear in the hearts of their adherents. The Christian life is marked by thankfulness and joy, not fear.

PRAY: Thank the Lord for the Gift of new life in Christ. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with thankfulness and joy as you share that life with others.

SATURDAY APRIL 16

Read: Luke 19: 28-44 in preparation for tomorrow’s sermon.

Consider coming to morning prayer today in the sanctuary at 6:00AM.

WEEKLY DEVOTIONS GUIDE

APRIL 10-16, 2011

BY: PASTOR ANDREW BEUNK

NEW WEST CRC

SERIES: A 'TANGIBLE DISPLAY' PEOPLE: JOURNEYING WITH JESUS IN LUKE

SERMON: “THE MARK OF A DISCIPLE: WATCHFULNESS AND STEWARDSHIP”

LUKE 19:11-27

DR. MICHAEL GOHEEN

SUNDAY APRIL 10

KEY THEME OR TAKE-AWAY:

MONDAY APRIL 11

Read: Mark 4: 26-29; Luke 19: 11

As Jesus' journey to Jerusalem was almost complete, there were those following Jesus, including his disciples, that expected the Kingdom to arrive suddenly, and with great power. Perhaps they thought a spontaneous revolt would rise up, or a great harm would fall on the enemies of God.

Jesus corrects this misunderstanding by telling a parable that depicts a season of diligent Kingdom service that anticipates the King's return. Mark says that this kind of service is like seed that is sown, tended, and cared for. "All by itself" it sprouts, grows, and bears fruit.

In this past Sunday's weekly church bulletin we read the story of the "Henan Evangelists" who were called to bring the Gospel to an area of Sichuan Province in China called Wanxian (if you have the bulletin, consider reading it again; it's under "Prayer Points"). The people of Wanxian refused their message. In submission to God, and in love for the residents of Wanxian, the Hanan witnesses washed the feet of Wanxian farmers, day after day, when they returned from the fields. This continued for 3 years. Almost unbelievable, but true! For three years, they planted seeds of the Kingdom through their humble service of washing the feet of the Wanxian farmers. For 3 years, no signs of fruit. Indeed, the Kingdom advances in God's own time, not ours.

But the harvest did come. Finally an elder of the village is converted on account of their selfless service. Then another, and another, such that within 3 weeks, 1,500 came to Christ!

The Kingdom advances in its own time, as we humbly, selflessly, and obediently serve the Master.

PRAY: Pray that God will give you a steadfast willingness to selflessly serve Christ each day in whatever task he calls you.

TUESDAY APRIL 12

Read: Acts 2: 22-36; Luke 19:12

In Jesus' day in order for someone to take up their rule as king, they first had to go to Rome to gain the status of king. Herod the Great had to do this, as did his son Archelaus. The parable relates to this practice, and Jesus intends for his listeners to identify him as the one who became King.

Jesus, one of "noble birth" set out for a "distant country." He "emptied" himself (Philippians 2), took on flesh and became a servant. Jesus journeyed from heavenly glory to earth. His journey culminated in crucifixion, death, resurrection, ascension, such that now he sits at the right hand of the Father. He "received" his Kingship, and has "returned" to be with his Father.

But before leaving, the King appointed 10 servants. The number ten symbolically denotes fullness or totality. In other words, the King appoints the totality of his servants with a task. He entrusts them with gifts, talents, and a task, and he calls them to faithful investment. Because he is coming back.

And when he returns he will ask, "how have you invested what I entrusted to you?" That is a question all followers of Jesus will be asked.

How will you reply?

PRAY: Present your "investment" to Christ. Thank him for his gifts. Ask Jesus to strengthen you for faithful service and for an investment that multiplies.

WEDNESDAY APRIL 13

Read: 1 Samuel 1: 9-20

Yesterday we "presented" our "investments" to God. Today's story is one of many in the Bible where someone invests their life for the purposes of God. Hannah "invests" her son for the Lord's service.

Last week Sunday in our worship service we listened to the testimony of a new member whose son was being baptised. She shared her struggle in witnessing to others, and said that she prayed to the Lord for a child who she would dedicate to Him, and raise to love and serve Christ. At this his baptism she testified of her desire to "invest" her son's life for God's glory.

There are many ways in our ordinary lives that we can invest the gifts and talents God has given us. I recently heard the story of an elderly lady who prayed that the Lord would use her in spite of her age and limited mobility and education. She heard about becoming a "friendship partner" with an international student. She became a friend to an Asian student; Asians typically have high regard for the elderly. She helped him practice his speaking and reading of English. One day she had opportunity to share her faith story with him. They talked more about Christianity until one day this student gave his life to the Lord. When he returned home, he shared his new found faith with his family, and they too accepted the Lord.

Simple hospitality and a willingness to testify led a whole family to Christ. In what ways has God called you to offer your simple, ordinary, day-to-day investments of Kingdom care, kindness, and obedience?

PRAY: Thank the Lord for everyday opportunities to serve the Kingdom.

THURSDAY APRIL 14

Read: Luke 19: 15-19; Isaiah 3:10; Revelation 20: 12

Does the parable teach us that God rewards us for our service on earth? I think it does. In Isaiah 3 we read of the Lord taking his place in court to judge the people. The sense here is of God in the heavenly courtroom of history judging the lives of people and promising reward or punishment.