



DEVOTIONS FOR LIFE

Aldersgate Church ~ St. Louis Park, MN

Week of March 5, 2023 (Matthew 20:1-16)

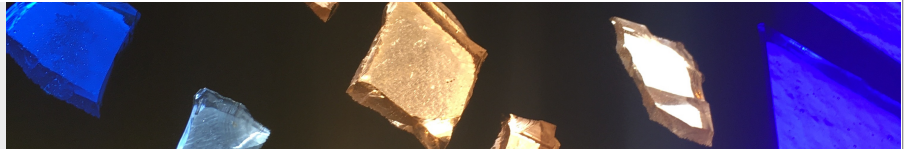
Prayer for Groups & Personal Devotion:

God, we thank you for your extravagant generosity that continues to catch us unaware, surprising us with joy and puzzlement. May we continue to be surprised in good ways, even as we become used to the unpredictable nature of your amazing grace.

We pray today for all who are strangers in our community: those who have moved here to find work; those whose work has brought them here; those whose circumstances have changed, not of their own choosing; and those who feel stuck here, with no other choices open to them.

God, whatever folk's circumstance, whatever they bring, whatever they need, may this be a place where they will find acceptance, generosity and love.

God, where we can acknowledge others, value their contributions, welcome them and offer



Devotions for Life

Context: To understand today's text requires backing up to Matthew 19. Likewise, to understand chapter 19, one must continue and read chapter 20! It's all one. In fact, it's curious that a chapter break was put there, because the beginning of chapter 20 is right in the middle of a conversation between Jesus and his Disciples, and it even is an explanation of the last verse of chapter 19, and even provides insight into Jesus' response in 19:17.



In chapter 19 a man comes to Jesus and asks him, "what good deed must I do to have eternal life" (19:16). Jesus mostly responds with "keep the commandments". The man says he has done so, and then Jesus says "if you wish to be perfect, go sell your possessions, give the money to the poor... and follow me". The man walks away "grieving" because he "had many possessions".

Then Jesus turns to his disciples and begins some brief teachings on the challenges of being wealthy in God's Kingdom.

In response to all of this, Peter turns to Jesus and says,

...hospitality, may we discover your spirit of generosity in serving our brothers and sisters, wherever they have come from and whatever they bring. Here in this place and wherever we serve in the coming week, may folk encountering us encounter your amazing grace. Amen

*(Prayer for Groups and Personal Devotion
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Compassion & Justice

Minnesota FoodShare Month:

March is Minnesota FoodShare Month, a 40+ year statewide effort to fill local food shelves. As usual we will be collecting food for STEP, and we're excited to do so in partnership with Spirit of Christ Lutheran. Specifically, this year we are **collecting cereal**. If you have the means pick up a bag or two of various cereals and drop them off at the entrance to the sanctuary. Also, STEP seems to have an on going need for paper grocery bags. If you have a stash to spare, consider donating those as well.



"In regards to leaving everything and following you, we've done that. What do we get? (19:27, paraphrase). Jesus responds with some assurances to Peter that there will be a reward in Heaven, but he ends the chapter with "But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first." It is here that we get the chapter break, but Jesus isn't finished!

In 20:1 he continues, "For the kingdom of heaven is like...", and then we get The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, which is this week's text. On top of that, note that the last verse in today's text (20:16) is the reverse equivalent of the last verse of chapter 19, the lead-in to the parable.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion:

1. What stood out to you in this story? What was hard to hear?
2. Who is the audience of this parable? How might that inform our understanding of it?
3. What is this parable about? What do we make of it?
4. Is God fair?
5. Is this parable about economics? Why or why not?
6. Why do all the workers get the same pay? What does this say about God and us?
7. What is the difference between equity and equality? Did the land owner pay the workers equitably? Equally?
8. What does it mean to be entitled? What does it mean to be resentful? How do the two connect?
9. What does Jesus mean by "the last will be first and the first will be last"?
10. The parable begins "the kingdom of heaven is like..." After examining it, what is this parable saying about the kingdom of heaven? Or another way, about Christian community or the "kingdom" of heaven?
11. Where/who are you in this parable?
12. What might God be doing in you through this parable?