

Home group notes – Week beginning 13th October 2013

Home group / study notes: Stewardship – two parables and some teaching from St Paul

Feel free to use as much or as little as you wish. The aim is to encourage us to become better disciples by being aware of the right use of God's gifts, in particular our money, and to help us think through our giving.

Parable 1

Read Luke 12:13-21. What had just happened? Did Jesus address the original request? Which brother might feel challenged by the parable?

Think of an occasion where you have felt hard done by, cheated even. Does Jesus' teaching help?

Read on: verses 22-31. Well known, but why not pause and let them sink in – someone read them slowly. Especially note that verse 31 is a *promise* from God.

St Paul

Read 1 Cor 15:51-16:4. Try to ignore the chapter division (chapters and verses are pretty arbitrary and were of course not in Paul's original letter!).

"So Paul, having scaled the heights of spiritual vision in chapter 15 – 'Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ'– dipped his pen in the ink and wrote on ... 'Now concerning the collection ...' " *

You might find this quote helpful, albeit in somewhat dated language... (or maybe we should have preaching like this in our church?):

Truth and activity are related as springs and rivers. If we want the one to be brimming, we must not ignore the other. Beneficence will soon become thin and scanty if it does not take its rise in the hills. Begin with chapter 16, 'Now concerning the collection' and the result will be a forced and chilling artifice... you begin without momentum. Begin on the heights of chapter 15, and chapter 16 will emerge with the sequence of inevitable result. The collection is related to the resurrection, and if we hide and minimise the truth of the resurrection our beneficence will only be a spasm, a transient emotion, and not the full and sustained volume of the river of life That is our inclination and temptation. We try to make rivers, when sometimes in our lives ... (and our churches?) ... there is no hill country, no land of plentiful springs. 'I will open rivers in high places (Is 41:18). And only when we have the 'high places' in our life, the enthroned and sovereign truths of atonement and resurrection, and the sublime and awful prospect of an unveiled immortality, only then will our life be a land of springs, musical with the sound of many waters, flowing with gladsome rivers to cheer and refresh the children of men.'

(J H Jowett sermon: 'Apostolic Optimism', 1901)

Do you live in the land of springs and rivers? If not, what is the biggest obstacle? (*Be aware that this might be personal and not something everyone will want to share*). How are giving and stewardship sometimes reduced to 'a forced and chilling artifice'?

Parable 2

Read Luke 19:11-27. (This is slightly different from the version we usually hear from Matthew 25). For today, just look at the differences between the first two and the third servants. What do their responses show about their relationship with the master? Are we to act out of the desire to serve or out of fear? How might this relate to the quotation above?

Prayer

Use the words of 'Take my life and let it be...' – see overleaf. Read it slowly, Lectio Divina style, then use the words as prompts, or just read again a verse of your choice (for once you could actually take turns in this to practice praying out loud). Allow time for God to speak to you.

**(From a workbook on stewardship prepared by the Methodist Church for Churches Together in Britain and Ireland)*

1) Take my life and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee;
take my moments and my days,
let them flow in ceaseless praise.

2) Take my hands, and let them move
at the impulse of thy love;
take my feet, and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee.

3) Take my voice, and let me sing
always, only, for my King;
take my lips, and let them be
filled with messages from thee.

4) Take my silver and my gold;
not a mite would I withhold;
take my intellect, and use
every power as thou shalt choose.

5) Take my will, and make it thine:
it shall be no longer mine;
take my heart: it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.

6) Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure-store;
take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.