

Wednesday

MATTHEW 25:14-30

Yikes. That ending though... I always thought the parable of the talents seemed pretty harsh. That poor guy just wanted to protect the money he had been given in order to please his boss. He took the safe route - which I'm usually all about. But, the problem here is the boss didn't want only his original investment back - he wanted to know what they'd done with it. He expected them to grow his wealth. To do this, the servants had to take a calculated risk and go all in. In the same way, God doesn't call us to stay in our safe boxes. God calls us to grow His kingdom and our own relationships with Him by falling dangerously in love with Him...and to me, that's pretty scary. I like safe bets and back up plans and questions I already know the answer to. But this parable seems to say that my safe, comfortable relationship with God isn't good enough. If I'm not willing to invest my whole life with Him, what growth am I missing out on? In what ways can I be like the first man and put my "talents" to work to learn more about God and share Him with other people? In what ways am I, like the last man, choosing the safe route over the one that glorifies God? One last thing that really stands out to me in this, is that when the first two servants do step out of their comfort zones, they prosper and are invited to join in their master's wealth. To me, this is just a reminder that when we go outside our comfort zones for the Lord, He's on our team. The future he holds for us is so much better than whatever we came up with. So, maybe it's not such a risky investment after all...

-Alexis Bolken

Thursday

GENESIS 19:25

Sodom and Gomorrah was a city that was full of evil people with wicked ways. God saw this city and did not like what it was doing so he was going to destroy it. Before he did, he allowed a man named Lot and his family to escape. Genesis 19:15 says, "The next morning at dawn, the angels were trying to make Lot hurry. They said, "This city will be punished, so take your wife and your two daughters who are still with you and leave this place. Then you will not be destroyed with the city."¹ Later in the scripture it says that if they were to look back they would be destroyed along with the city. The wife did look back and she was turned into a pile of salt. Today's world is full of wicked ways. It is important that we do not get caught up in them so we will be protected and safe. God gives us free will but we should choose to use our life to glorify Him. Are you using your life to glorify him? I encourage you to read your Bible more and get devoted in scripture. Once you do this, it is important that you do not go back to your old ways so you can keep glorifying God.

-Chasen Prudgen

Friday

2 KINGS 17: 13-14

Holding on can be so easy. Holding onto control. Holding onto the idea that you know what to do. Holding onto the notion that if you do enough, you can fix all the things that go wrong. Holding on can be so much more comfortable than letting go. The people of Israel and Judah found comfort in the idols that they could see, and in the rituals that they could perform. They had come to believe that by going off on their own and doing these things, they would have peace, prosperity, and protection: but this proved not to be the case. As these verses from 2 Kings show, the people were not willing to trust in God, and thus, they were brought low and forced into exile. While we might not be facing the threat of conquest and exile today, the story of the people of Israel and Judah serves as a reminder of what can happen when people aren't willing to surrender to God. Whether it is because of pride, shame, or some other reason, it can be so uncomfortable for us to seek out God's help in dealing with the struggles that arise in our lives. But the more we seem to go our way, the more we seem to end up worse than when we began, just like to people of Israel and Judah. So, I issue a challenge to anyone who reads this. The next time a situation arises, and you find yourself trying to fix it alone, step back and ask why you don't feel comfortable giving up control. Why are you holding on, instead of letting go? Because just as God's people put their trust in him during their exile and were blessed to return home, putting our trust in God when it's not comfortable can lead to his blessings for us.

-Albert Godlesky

Monday

COLOSSIANS 3:1-17

God calls us to do a lot of difficult things. In this passage, He asks us to fight our human nature. Easily one of the most difficult things God calls me, and everyone else, to do is to forgive. We are not just asked to forgive the people we love, those we are closest to, but our worst enemies. Anger and resentment build up inside of me way too easily and it does nothing but make my attitude worse. Even though He is so clear about forgiving others why do I still choose to harbor resentment? Especially when God could so easily hold countless things over me. But He doesn't. He allows me to mess up over and over and forgives me completely each and every time. Then He calls me to do the same. Forgiveness is a mindset, and one that I have to pray about constantly. It's hard to forgive someone, especially when there are strong emotions tied to them, but God's word is explicit and we can not just overlook His call to forgive.

-Haley Smith