



KINGDOM PROSPERITY

PART 2

Forty Daily Devotions
from Various Passages in the Bible
(Based on the NKJV)

Introduction

Much is being said today regarding prosperity from church pulpits. Pastors tend to preach on topics about which they think people most want to hear. There is a place for teaching on Scriptural prosperity, but we must be careful to keep it to that prosperity which is truly based on the Scriptures themselves. Over the next 40 days, we will cover passages from various places in the Bible that deal with true prosperity. Some of these passages will discuss money and other financial principles. Some will deal with possessions. However, all the passages will deal with our heart attitude toward all those things.

Daily Reading Schedule

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
1	Matthew 13:1-13	06/27/22
2	Matthew 13:14-23	06/28/22
3	1 Timothy 6:1-10	06/29/22
4	1 Timothy 6:11-21	06/30/22
5	Proverbs 21:1-9	07/01/22
6	Proverbs 21:13-21	07/02/22
7	1 John 3:1-10	07/03/22
8	1 John 3:11-23	07/04/22
9	Hebrews 13:1-9	07/05/22
10	Hebrews 13:10-25	07/06/22
11	Psalms 23:1-6	07/07/22
12	Psalms 24:1-10	07/08/22
13	Romans 8:16-28	07/09/22
14	Romans 8:29-37	07/10/22
15	John 6:1-12	07/11/22
16	John 6:26-35	07/12/22
17	Luke 19:1-10	07/13/22
18	Luke 19:11-26	07/14/22
19	Leviticus 26:1-13	07/15/22
20	Leviticus 26:14-26	07/16/22

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
21	Proverbs 3:1-10	07/17/22
22	Proverbs 3:11-18	07/18/22
23	Malachi 3:1-10	07/19/22
24	Malachi 3:11-17	07/20/22
25	Ecclesiastes 5:1-9	07/21/22
26	Ecclesiastes 5:10-20	07/22/22
27	Isaiah 32:1-8	07/23/22
28	Isaiah 32:9-18	07/24/22
29	John 11:1-11	07/25/22
30	John 11:17-29	07/26/22
31	Psalms 37:1-9	07/27/22
32	Psalms 37:10-21	07/28/22
33	Colossians 1:1-10	07/29/22
34	Colossians 1:11-20	07/30/22
35	1 Peter 3:1-12	07/31/22
36	1 Peter 4:1-11	08/01/22
37	Matthew 1:17-25	08/02/22
38	Matthew 2:1-12	08/03/22
39	Luke 2:1-7	08/04/22
40	Luke 2:8-20	08/05/22

Day 1: Matthew 13:1-13

“...He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: ‘Behold, a sower went out to sow.’” (Matthew 13:3)

Parables

A parable is a mostly fictional story that serves to illustrate factual truth about God’s Kingdom. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke contain about 30 of these stories. Although John’s Gospel contains no parables, it does use figures of speech and illustrations that help us to better understand God’s Word. The parable that we have read this morning was given to help us better understand the human heart. Many call this the Parable of the Sower, but I am convinced that it is more about the Seed and the Soil than anything else. The Seed is the Word of God. The Soil represents the conditions of the human hearts into which that seed must be sown. Some have gladly received God’s Word by faith and, as a result, enjoy what we know to be Kingdom Prosperity. Others, however, respond to God differently, and even sometimes reject God’s Word altogether. If we have heard and understood the Word of God, then we are to be most thankful! Verse 11 clearly states that such understanding of the Gospel message is a gift to us. It did not come because we are smarter or better than others. It came as a gift of God’s divine mercy and grace. But note that God desires to give us more (v. 12) and to the point that we have His blessings in abundance (v. 12). Here is a bit of non-fiction for you: We all owe God a great deal and should be serving Him at every opportunity and to the fullest of our capabilities.

Prayer Emphasis: **Take** an inventory of your blessings today. **Thank** God for the very fact that you heard His Gospel and were able to understand it well enough to come to Him for your salvation. **Pray** for an unsaved friend, neighbor, or family member today.

Day 2: Matthew 13:14-23

“But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear;” (Matthew 13:16)

The Deceitfulness of Wealth

When Isaiah first began his ministry, God told him that people were not going to understand him. What happened to Isaiah was prophetic of what was to happen to the Messiah when he came to rescue man from sin and its bondage. As Jesus preached the truth, many were like those in Isaiah’s day. They could hear but they could not understand. They could see but not really perceive. It was just the opposite with the disciples. Jesus could take them aside and teach them clearly the meaning of His words, whether given in parables or not. They were “blessed” with spiritual seeing and hearing (v. 16) and, therefore, heard and saw things that many righteous people before them had desired to see. As Jesus explains the parable of the Sower, Seed, and Soil, we cannot help but be saddened by what some people will cling to even if it costs them dearly. Verse 22 speaks of those who hear the Word but allow their interest therein to be choked out by things that they consider to be of greater value. How sad that people could be so distracted by material wealth and possessions that they would miss hearing the truth from God’s Word. Wealth was a deceitful thing in the society in which Jesus lived, and it remains a very deceitful thing today. Even some that are truly saved remain far too attached to the things of this world.

Prayer Emphasis: **Remember** that Satan is a liar and has only evil intentions. **Commit** your heart to God and His Word and **trust** Him to supply all that you need to have true Kingdom Prosperity. **Remember** that we have been given this blessed gift of salvation. **Make** the most of your life you have in Christ.

Day 3: 1 Timothy 6:1-10

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” (1 Timothy 6:10)

The Love of Money

Today we read one of the most often quoted and misquoted verses in the Bible. Many have misquoted this verse by merely stating that, “Money is the root of all evil.” Money, in and of itself, is not evil. Like all things, money can be used to glorify ourselves or to glorify God. Money can be invested in the work of God’s Kingdom or money can be used to advance the work of our enemy. But money is not the problem. People are the problem, especially those who misquote Scriptures and attempt to lay the blame for the condition of this world at the feet of an inanimate object. Quoted correctly, this verse clearly states that it is the “love of money” that serves as the “root” of evil. People who live only to become rich in material possessions are in love with money. People who measure their personal value by the bottom line on a financial statement or the balance in asset accounts are in love with money. This love for money can become the most distracting thing in our lives and lead us to wander from the path of faith to which we have all been called. Perhaps one of the greatest facets of Kingdom Prosperity is the ability to be content without having to have every material thing that we see and desire. Grief awaits those who place too much “stock” in anything but Jesus.

Prayer Emphasis: **Examine** your heart today to see if it is too attached to material things. **Detach** yourself from the kind of thinking that places too much emphasis on what we can hold in our *hands* and **attach** yourself to the kind of thinking that emphasizes that which we hold in our *hearts*. **Invest** in God’s Kingdom work today.

Day 4: 1 Timothy 6:11-21

“Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.” (1 Timothy 6:17)

The Best Kind of Rich

Paul is careful to warn even Pastor Timothy to “flee” from greediness and the love of money. But fleeing the wrong things was not enough. Timothy was exhorted to “pursue righteousness” and other spiritual qualities (v. 11). Pastor Timothy was to “command” any affluent believers to avoid arrogance and to see the danger of putting their hope in what they possessed and not in the God who possessed them (v. 17). All Christians should know that God richly provides for us according to our needs. There are no recessions in Heaven. But note that the pastor is to “command” those who have been blessed financially to, “do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share” (v. 18). If they did that, they would be “storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come” (v. 19). The best kind of rich is the kind that does not hinder our ability to see money for what it is, from whence it comes, why God gives it, and where we are to invest it. How strange it seems that God would have to remind the pastor to “command” believers to be careful about money. What a powerful thing it must be!

Prayer Emphasis: **Ask** God to give you the wisdom to know when and what to flee in life! **Pray** for the kind of humility that will allow you to listen to spiritual authorities on subjects such as money. **Pray** for pastors today and support them in their efforts to teach the meaning of true Kingdom Prosperity.

Day 5: Proverbs 21:1-9

“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.” (Proverbs 21:1)

It’s All About the LORD

Proverbs 21 begins (v. 1) and ends (v. 31) with references about the LORD. Verse two declares that a person’s ways may seem right to him, but God has a way to weigh the heart and reveal to us our innermost motivations. God desires our obedience to Him more than He desires our religious sacrifices. When we diligently plan our every action, we can be assured that we will lead profitable lives (v. 5). When we hastily obey the motivations introduced to us by the flesh, we will find just the opposite to be true. Kingdom Prosperity comes to those who carefully weigh their every action to determine its motivation. When our motivations are godly, then right actions will follow. Ill-gotten gains are of no value to the believer and do more to hurt us than to help us. We must never be willing to sacrifice our character for the sake of a financial profit. The kind of fortune that comes without honor and integrity is short-lived and like a deadly snare. Satan continues to bait his traps with money and too many people never learn the lesson the first time they are caught in them. The best thing is just to keep it all about the LORD! Amen!

Prayer Emphasis: Put God first in your every *thought*, and He will soon be first in your every *act*. **Memorize** a verse of Scripture today. **Write** a favorite out on a card or slip of paper and carry it with you. **Look** at it, **read** it, **meditate** on it as you go about your day. There is nothing better for your heart than a good dose of God’s Word!

Day 6: Proverbs 21:13-21

“Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard.” (Proverbs 21:13)

The Big “If”

In the NIV our focus verse reads, *“If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor.”* The word “if” may represent many things, but to me it discloses that I have options! Closing our ears “to the cry of the poor” is something that God knows we need to be warned against. The word “poor” does not always mean to be without money, and the “cry” of the poor is not always for monetary help. In Proverbs we find the needy being assisted by sharing food (22:9), lending money (28:8), and defending rights (31:9). All of these are things that we would want to have done for us if we ever found ourselves in a time of need. We must never forget the law of sowing and reaping. We always reap what we sow. If we shut our ears to the cry of the poor, we *will* (not *may*) someday cry out and “not be heard” ourselves. There is a strong word of caution in verse 17 of today’s Scripture. When we live for pleasure (from a Hebrew word meaning “sport”) we soon become poor. America is a prime example of such folly. While multiplied millions of Americans are without jobs, athletes and entertainers continue to earn salaries in the millions. “Wine and oil” were both associated with lavish feasting and extravagant living (v. 17). *If* we invest our money in our own personal entertainment and extravagant luxuries while others have nothing with which to even feed their children, then we will surely “not be rich” (v. 17). (I will leave the interpretation of Proverbs 21:19 to your own opinion.)

Prayer Emphasis: **Decide** now to be a kind and generous person. **Remind** yourself of all the kind acts that have ever been done for you and **recall** how good it made you feel to know that someone cared about you. **Get in** on the giving end and you will surely be blessed.

Day 7: 1 John 3:1-10

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.” (1 John 3:1)

Behold!

This verse begins with a Greek word that is translated “behold” in most Bibles. John is inviting us to take a close look at the greatness of the love that God has lavished on us – love enough that sinners could now be called the sons of God! As the children of God, we are heirs to the One who owns the world and all that is therein! However, since the world refused to recognize Jesus for who He was, they will also refuse to recognize us for who we are. But John says that we are “now” the children of God (v. 2). When Jesus takes the church to be with Him, we will then be “like Him” (v. 2). In the meantime, this hope (Jesus) strengthens us and leads us to the right paths. True Kingdom Prosperity is finding and walking in the right way – in step with God. When we walk this way, we will find that it allows us to avoid being in bondage to constant and habitual sin – the kind that so easily gets us off track and leads us astray. When we walk this way, we are not so easily deceived by those who teach false doctrines or misinterpret God’s Word to their own advantage. How do you best determine who is born of God and who is following the evil one? Watch the way they walk! Some of the most memorable moments of my life are when someone asks, “Are you Hyman Linton’s boy?” It always made me proud to know that I reminded people of my father. Walk tall today, for you are “now” a child of God Almighty! Make your heavenly Father proud!

Prayer Emphasis: Express love to a fellow believer today. **Exhibit** a lifestyle that reminds people of your Father in heaven. **Thank** God for your salvation and call to serve Him.

Day 8: 1 John 3:11-23

“But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (1 John 3:17)

A Personal Word

John is very clear here that he is writing to believers. He clearly states that such things as hatred, anger, and strife are abnormal among believers. We have known that from the beginning – but we sometimes lose sight of this basic tenet of our faith as we walk together in this world. The phrase “from the beginning” in verse 11 holds a dual purpose. It speaks of the time in which we first began to believe and follow the Lord, and it also speaks of the relationship of Cain and Abel, brothers who lived near “the beginning” of Biblical history. Verse 17 clearly indicates that, as heirs of God, we have access to the greatest treasure of all – the love of God. He has already bestowed that part of our inheritance upon us, for we are told that it is already “in” us. Because of this love, we can respond righteously to opportunities to share our material possessions with those in need. We may not be called to the ultimate sacrifice which our Savior faced, but we can express what that sacrifice means to us as we share with others. It is one thing to talk about God’s love, but it is another thing to live it out in our daily lives. Words can only say so much. When we live unselfishly, we can boldly come before God and ask him for all things.

Prayer Emphasis: Look for opportunities to share what you already have and then pray for God to give you more good things to distribute to those in need. Give in such a way that those who receive know the best part of the gift – that someone loves them!

Day 9: Hebrews 13:1-9

“Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.” (Hebrews 13:1-2)

Last Words

We do not know with certainty the name of the human writer of Hebrews, but we do know that these words are inspired by God and that they are written for all believers. The words we read this morning make up the first part of the writer’s closing remarks. These are some of the last words he will probably ever have the opportunity to share with these fellow believers. He asked them to continue to love one another as family. And then he asked them to remember to “entertain” (share with, provide for) strangers – people that might not be a part of their church family. He even admonishes them to remember those who are in prison or being mistreated by others – and to treat them as you would want to be treated if you were yourself a prisoner or suffering from persecution. It seems that Kingdom Prosperity keeps coming back to that Golden Rule of doing for others what we would desire that they would do for us! But note that this Golden Rule is to be applied even within our closest relationships, including marriage. Money, or the love thereof, can be one of the greatest distractions for believers. Therefore, we are warned to keep our lives free from the love of money and to learn to be content with what we have. One of our greatest possessions is found in God’s promise to never leave us or forsake us. If we cannot find contentment in that, then we may never find it all.

Prayer Emphasis: Pay attention to what matters most today. Do not allow distractions to hinder you from your true calling to walk as an ambassador for Christ. **Focus** on your Christian life and make decisions that are based on faith and not on finances.

Day 10: Hebrews 13:10-25

“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.” (Hebrews 13:15)

Do Not Forget

Verse 15 encourages us to continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God. But those words are in no way referring to an offering that can be held in our hands. This kind of “praise to God” can only come from the heart of an appreciative believer that is devoted to God. A right heart attitude will be a constant reminder to “do good and to share” (v. 16). It will also remind us to listen and learn from those who are in places of spiritual authority in our lives (v. 17). These are powerful admonitions and were obviously matters of great importance to this devoted Christian writer. However, we find more last words that should be of great importance to every believer. One of the greatest assets of the child of God is the peace that only God can give. That “peace” will equip us with everything necessary for doing the will of God in our lives. When we have peace enough within us to allow God to work through us, then God will be pleased and glorified. How, in this world, can we live in such a heavenly way? The answer is made clear in the final words of the letter: “Grace be with you all” (v. 25). Kingdom Prosperity never allows us to forget that God’s grace is the foundation for all that we say or do as we live out our faith in this world.

Prayer Emphasis: Humble yourself before God today and acknowledge the grace that has been shown so abundantly in your own life. **Allow** the peace of God to live within you and then **exhibit** the power of God to others as He works through you. **Remember** that the Christian life is about ministering to others.

Day 11: Psalm 23:1-6

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” (Psalm 23:1)

The LORD is...

If you were handed a fill in the blank exam, how would you complete the phrase, “The LORD is _____”? David chose to write the words “My Shepherd” to describe his perception of the Father. In ancient times, it was not an uncommon thing for kings to be referred to as shepherds. Thusly Jesus, the “King of kings,” referred to himself as the “good shepherd” (John 10:14). As our Shepherd, God makes every provision necessary for our earthly life – to the point that we can say we do not live in “want” (lack) of anything. Through our Good Shepherd our needs are met. We are *nourished* at the hands of our Shepherd as He leads us to green pastures and beside still waters (v. 2). We are *nurtured* by our Shepherd as He guides us in paths of righteousness (v. 3). We are *noticed* by our Shepherd all through our lives and even to the point where we take our final walk through the valley of the shadow of death (v. 4). We are *anointed* by our Shepherd to the point where our cup overflows, and we are convinced that the goodness and mercy He has bestowed upon us will last us from here to eternity! But, considering all these blessings, we should remember that we are *named* for our Shepherd and that it is for His name’s sake that He guides us in the paths of righteousness (v. 3). Kingdom Prosperity is more about living a life than it is about making a living!

Prayer Emphasis: Spend some time “filling in the blank” with titles by which you may reference the LORD. Praise Him for the many wonderful things He has done for you. Share how good your Shepherd has been to you with someone you meet along the paths of righteousness today.

Day 12: Psalm 24:1-10

“Who is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.” (Psalm 24:8)

Who Is the King of Glory?

Just as plainly as the LORD is identified as our Shepherd in Psalm 23, he is identified as our King in Psalm 24. No believer will ever fully enjoy Kingdom Prosperity until they share David’s conclusion that the earth, and everything therein, belongs to God. God’s ownership is not limited to mere possessions, because He also lays claim to the ownership of the people of the world. Note the “those” (NKJV) or “all” (NIV) in verse one and make a note in your Bible that God is talking about you! The words “clean hands” refers to right actions while a “pure heart” refers to right attitudes (v. 4). What outward evidence of clean hands and pure hearts is mentioned in verse four? Those who have given their lives to vanity (idol worship – NIV) or lived by teachings that have strayed from the Word of God can know that their actions and attitudes are far from God’s desired intention. David gives his readers an exhortation to “lift up” their heads and then explains why they should do so (v. 7). Note the reference to “gates” and “doors” in verse seven. Just as surely as a city would allow passage to a coming king, we are to allow the King of Glory to ride freely into our hearts and take His appropriate place in our lives. Only one person can answer the question asked in our title today. Let Him prove himself to you as you begin to trust and treat Him as your King.

Prayer Emphasis: Realize that stewardship is based on trust. Decide to trust God enough to treat Him as your King. Allow Him into your life in a most personal way and soon you will be telling everyone about the King of Glory! Trust God with everything!

Day 13: Romans 8:16-28

“...we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” (Romans 8:16b-17)

A Precious Promise

The fact that we are called “heirs” in verse 17 can only be attributed to our being “the children of God” and “joint heirs with Christ”. As believers, we are to share in His sufferings as we walk through this life, but we do so with the fullest confidence that we will also share in His glory. As Paul weighed this truth, he concluded that this was a good deal on our part as he compared what we must face in this world today with what we will have in eternity! The sufferings of this world are temporary while the glory that we experience in Christ is eternal. How wise we are to trade temporary things for things that we can enjoy for eternity. As we wait eagerly for heaven, we are reminded that God has not lost control of this world. We can rest assured that all things really are working together for our good if we love Him and are called to His purposes. We do not have a promise that all things in our lives will *seem* good. Sometimes it is difficult to praise God in our sufferings. However, we do have the promise that all these things will work together *for* our good and that we will grow closer and closer to God through our many trials and tribulations. How much more can God give us than His own precious promise that He is always working on our behalf?

Prayer Emphasis: Accept that thing that you have repeatedly asked God to remove today and **allow** Him time to show you the good in it. **Allow** the bitterness of your trials to be overcome by the sweetness found in the many blessings that God has given to you. **Believe** that God is at work for your good and on your behalf.

Day 14: Romans 8:29-37

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Romans 8:29)

Predestined

Predestined! The mere mention of this word can create chaos in what was otherwise a most friendly conversation. Without adding to the mix, let me circumvent the arguments about what the word “predestined” means theologically and explain what it means to God’s people personally. We have been predestined to be conformed to the image of God’s Son. Being conformed to Christ means that we adopt and accept His life practices and purposes as our own. He was among us as one that served – and then He lived up to that statement at His every opportunity to obey the will of the Father. If we are truly like Him, then we realize that we have been predestined to be called to walk in His likeness – or like He walked. Since that walk is going to involve suffering, we can rest assured that we have been predestined to be convinced of His divine presence and that God will not spare us anything necessary to be His people and walk as lights in this very dark world. No matter our circumstances, we can enjoy Kingdom Prosperity as we remain confident that nothing – absolutely nothing – can separate us from the love of Christ. Because of these things, we are predestined to be conquerors through Him who loves us. The New Testament teaches that believers are predestined to service.

Prayer Emphasis: Note that we are not called to simply sound like Jesus when we talk. We are called to resemble Jesus in our walk. **Praise** God for every opportunity to be obedient and then make the most of every one of them.

Day 15: John 6:1-12

“And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted.” (John 6:11)

The Manna Man

In today’s reading, Jesus was again followed by a great crowd of needy people. Since the witness of His ability to heal had drawn those who were diseased, we can assume that many of these people came to Him for healing. However, Jesus looked far beyond the obvious and noticed that which was most immediate. He went to Philip to discuss how they might secure bread enough to feed this large crowd of people. Philip had obviously been thinking about the same thing. His response to Jesus was that “eight month’s wages” (NIV) would not be enough to accomplish that task. Most believe that this amount of money signified all that Philip and the disciples had available to them in their treasury. Philip and the disciples were to learn a very valuable lesson about Kingdom Prosperity on this day. They were going to learn that God’s provision is not limited to our possessions. Jesus had a super-natural plan in mind, and He was quick to involve the disciples in it. Imagine the joy that the disciples experienced as they fed all those people with the contents of one little boy’s lunch! We have so many ways to share God’s blessings today. We can feed people who live around the block at the same time that we meet the needs of those who live around the world. Wouldn’t the disciples love to be here with us today?

Prayer Emphasis: Think and act like someone who truly believes in God today! **Face** your situations with faith in God and believe Him to be your source for every need. **Share** what God has given you and **praise** Him when He just keeps on refilling your basket!

Day 16: John 6:26-35

“And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.’” (John 6:35)

The Bread of Life

The words of verse 26 were spoken to the multitudes that followed Jesus for reasons that might not have been all spiritual. He so much as told them this as He told them that they were more motivated by their physical needs than their spiritual needs. What a waste it would be to leave a meeting with Jesus with a full belly but an empty heart! However, it happened then, and it still happens today! Many people only pursue a relationship with Christ for what they can get from Him with no thought as to what He would have us give to others. The bread of this world will eventually spoil but the bread that comes from heaven endures and has no expiration date. When we share this bread with others, we are giving them the eternal truth of God’s Word. When we “labor” (NKJV) or “work” (NIV) for this eternal bread, we are not investing in this world but the world to come. When Jesus becomes our source, we are told that we will never hunger. When we place our faith in Him, we will never again thirst. I don’t know about you, but that sure sounds a lot like Kingdom Prosperity to me!

Prayer Emphasis: Evaluate your reasons for following Christ. **Forsake** all selfish motivations and **ask** God to make your every motivation *sincere* in its *purpose* and *spiritual* in its *practice*. **Serve** God today for no other reason than He is Lord!

Day 17: Luke 19:1-10

*“Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich.”
(Luke 19:2)*

Zacchaeus

Zacchaeus responded to the message of Jesus in a different way than other rich people in the New Testament. Although he was wealthy, he knew he was a sinner. As the chief publican (head of the local IRS Office) he was probably rejected by those in his community because he was loyal to Rome. It is hard to imagine this man of influence and affluence running ahead of the crowds and climbing a tree so that he could get a look at Jesus. Sycamore trees grew to 30 or 40 feet in height, but had short trunks and low hanging branches, so it was not a difficult tree to climb. Imagine how this man felt when Jesus came to a stop beneath the tree in which he perched and said, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house” (v. 5). The second verse in our reading this morning tells us that Zacchaeus “was rich” (v. 2). In verse six, we are told that he is richer because he has joyfully received Christ. Verse eight finds him at his richest when his life has been so transformed that he desires to make restitution to those from whom he has falsely collected taxes plus give half of everything that he owned to the poor. I think this man received a good dose of what we call Kingdom Prosperity!

Prayer Emphasis: **Ask** God for a proper perspective about money. Being a good Christian is infinitely more important than having a good job or lots of status with others. It didn’t take Zacchaeus long to see what was really important in life. **Become** the financially responsible saint that God has called you to be.

Day 18: Luke 19:11-26

““For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”” (Luke 19:26)

Minas or Minus?

At the time Jesus gave the parable we read today, most of His disciples had been walking with Him long enough to have already been assigned duties and responsibilities. Judas was already the treasurer and Philip, most believe, was already the one responsible for the procurement of food. Since this parable was not addressed to the disciples only, it was given to help Israel see that they were responsible to God for all the good things He provided for them and done for them. Jesus tells of 10 servants receiving one mina each. A mina represented about three months’ wages for the average person, so it was a considerable sum of money. But, with the gift came responsibility. They were to put the money to use until their benefactor returned. When the nobleman returned, he called the servants together to find out what they had done with the money. The first two servants had put their gift to work and earned profits. We do not know the results from all ten of the servants, but we do know that one of them did absolutely nothing with the gift he received. His mina was taken away from him and given to those who could be more trusted with their master’s blessings.

Prayer Emphasis: **Realize** that Kingdom Prosperity has much to do with recognizing our responsibility to work for Jesus until the day of His return. **Seek** out your spiritual gift and put it to work as soon as possible. When our Master returns, will you honor him with your “minas” or be found in the “minus” because you never activated the gift(s) He gave you?

Day 19: Leviticus 26:1-13

“If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them, then I will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.” (Leviticus 26:3-4)

Blessings on Obedience

There are three distinct blessings promised to God’s people if they would obey Him. First, God promised them *prosperity* (v. 3–6). If they would follow His decrees and commands, God promised to send them rain in its due season so that the ground would yield its crops and the trees would produce an abundance of fruit. He promised them a grain harvest that would be so bountiful that they would still be threshing grain when it was time to begin harvesting their grapes! Then, the grape harvest was to be so bountiful that they would still be harvesting grapes up to the time to plant again. In verse 10, God told them they would still be eating from the previous year’s harvest when it was time to bring in the new crops. They were going to have to make room for all that God was going to give His obedient children! Second, God promised them *peace* (v. 6-10). The people were to receive divine protection from wild animals as well as from all their enemies. If they did have to fight, they were going to be victorious and supernaturally empowered to the point that 100 of them could defeat 10,000 from an opposing army. Then, God promised His *presence* to His obedient people (v. 11-13). God promised to be with them as He had been with those whom He brought out of Egypt. He certainly gave them some promises worth living for!

Prayer Emphasis: **Believe** God’s promises! **Accept** His challenge to live for Him and watch Him provide for you just as He has promised. **Claim** your promises of prosperity, peace, and presence today.

Day 20: Leviticus 26:14-26

“...I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.” (Leviticus 26:16)

The “Other” Answer

There is another answer to God’s call to obedience. It is not to answer at all. Doing nothing when God calls us to follow Him is as sinful as any evil thing that we could ever do. Disobedience brings great distress into the lives of God’s children (v. 14-17). This does not mean that all sickness and trouble is a result of disobedience, but it does mean that willful disobedience will result in loss of blessing and chastisement from the Lord. Disobedience brought seasons of draught and poor harvests (v. 18-20). The skies above would be like iron and the ground like bronze – hardened due to the lack of rain. Disobedience would bring dread to these people who had earlier been promised safety and protection if only they would obey God (v. 21-22). The same people who could have easily defeated their enemies and walked without fear of wild animals would soon see their children and livestock lost to them. If all this was not enough to get their attention, God stated that He would be forced to send disease in the form of a plague against them (v. 23-25). Lastly, God said that the disobedience of the people would result in a time of financial depression (v. 26). Bread would be scarce, and they would never have enough to eat and be satisfied. This makes you wonder why anyone would choose to give that “Other Answer” and say “No” to God.

Prayer Emphasis: **Promise** to be an obedient Christian who does not refuse to give God all that is due Him. **Be attentive** to God’s commands and be ready to obey. **Walk** in Kingdom Prosperity today and **thank** God every step of the way!

Day 21: 1 Proverbs 3:1-10

“My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; for length of days and long life and peace they will add to you.” (Proverbs 3:1-2)

The Best Life

Many are the promises to those who will remember and keep the commandments of God. To the obedient, God promises *prolonged life*. In several places in Proverbs, longevity is promised to those who obey God (See Proverbs 3:16; 4:10; 9:11; 10:27; 14:27; and 15:24). A longer life offers us greater opportunity to live for God and be His witnesses in this world. But God’s blessings go far beyond extended time. The best life is also rewarded with prosperity. In this case, *prosperity* is found in our love and faithfulness to God. When we love God and live faithfully for Him, then we will enjoy the favor of God and man. But God isn’t finished with His promises just yet. He goes on to say that the best life also holds the promise of *plenty*. When we trust in the LORD with all our heart and acknowledge Him in all our ways; when we honor the LORD with our wealth and the first fruits of all our blessings, then our barns will be filled to overflowing and our vats will be filled beyond capacity and overflow with new wine. We have all been given the blessing of life – and we have also been given the blessing of free will. The best life does not come to those who have it by *chance* but by *choice*. Choose wisely, my friend, and you will always be grateful that you did.

Prayer Emphasis: Choose to not live according to man’s wisdom. **Elect** to live by the wisdom of God. **Honor** Him today with a gift of your very best. **Watch** and **learn** that God always keeps His promises to those who choose to live in Kingdom Prosperity.

Day 22: Proverbs 3:11-18

“She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.” (Proverbs 3:15)

Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones

My girls love to watch the Jewelry channel on television. By doing so, they have become quite wise in their knowledge of many kinds of precious metals and stones. In our verses tonight, we find wisdom personified as a woman. Those who find this woman (wisdom) understand that she is more profitable to them than silver and yields a far better return than gold or precious stones. Nothing else compares to the riches that a life of obedience can bring to God’s children. Wisdom accepts God’s love even when it comes in the form of discipline or rebuke. Wisdom does not become angry with God when He corrects or chastises. Right responses to God result in longer, better lives that are rich in things that money cannot buy. Honor is one of those things. When we fully embrace wisdom as a dear friend, our lives are more pleasant, peaceful, and prosperous. Surely, we are blessed when we lay hold to wisdom and choose her as a life-long companion. The greatest blessing in my life is found in watching those I love making wise choices. The Bible is God’s “Jewelry Channel.” Watch it and learn the difference that wisdom can make in your life and the lives of those you love.

Prayer Emphasis: **Tune in** to God and His Word and watch God go to work in your life. **Praise** your children for the right decisions they make and gently, lovingly guide them as you set the right example for them in your own life. **Believe** that God’s promises are the key to Kingdom Prosperity and put your faith to practice as you **walk** humbly before God.

Day 23: Malachi 3:1-10

“*Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this, ' Says the LORD of hosts, 'If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.'” (Malachi 3:10)*

The Windows of Heaven

God warns us that there is coming a day when He will return to examine His people. This examination is not to harm us but to help us. He will purify and judge His people in accordance to how well they have lived for Him. This is not a test *redemption*. If so, then salvation is found in our works and not in the work of our Savior. This examination is about *rewards*. However, God promised His people that this examination will not be unannounced. In this time of testing, God will reveal the quality of the works of those who love Him. No one is exempt from this final exam. Those who score well in this time of testing will be those who paid careful attention to the words of our Divine Teacher. They will recognize the important questions and be prepared with the right answers. One of the most important questions will be about robbing God. We might ask, “How can we rob God?” His response is that we can rob God with our tithes and offerings. Unlike our earthly educators, God tells us that the best way to prepare for His test is to test Him. We are encouraged to bring the whole tithe to Him and watch how He opens the “windows” (NKJV) or “floodgates” (NIV) of heaven and pours out more blessings than we have room enough to receive.

Prayer Emphasis: **Bring** the whole tithe to God! **Give** to Him from more than just your treasures. **Give** to God of your time and talents. **Honor** God by returning to Him from all the many things He has given to you. Kingdom Prosperity is to graduate from the School of Life with honors!

Day 24: Malachi 3:11-17

“*Your words have been harsh against Me, ' Says the LORD, 'Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?''” (Malachi 3:13)*

Watch Your Words!

Our God is always working on the behalf of those who choose to obey Him. He promises to protect us from the things that can devour our crops and the fruit on our vines. He promises to provide for us a Kingdom Prosperity that will be the envy of the nations. In all our testing, perhaps the greatest test is the one that tests our tongues. We speak “harsh” things against God when we question His motivations and purposes. When we begin to question whether or not it is beneficial to obey Him in all that He asks or think that He asks too much of us, we dare to challenge the love and loyalty He has promised to those who obey Him. When we mourn at the thought of giving to God, then we are surely not being the cheerful givers He has commanded us to be. Those who fear the LORD speak words of wisdom to their fellow believers and encourage them to trust God in every aspect of life. God hears these wise believers and will remember those who have chosen to maintain a Christian witness in this world. The greatest blessing will be to know that our lives have been invested in service to God and not to ourselves.

Prayer Emphasis: **Measure** what you give to God against what He has given to you, and you will never give with regret. **Rejoice** at the opportunity to give to God and you will surely rejoice in His presence when you stand before Him. **Stop** worrying and **start** trusting. **Remember** the words of Jesus, “**Give** and it will be given to you” (Luke 6:38).

Day 25: Ecclesiastes 5:1-9

“Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil.” (Ecclesiastes 5:1)

Keep Your Promises to God

When we are warned to “Walk prudently when we go to the house of God,” we are being warned against making promises that we have not carefully thought out and have made no preparation to keep. We are told to listen and make sure that our promises are in direct response to that which He is asking of us and not based on what we simply think that He wants to hear. Quick and hasty promises are often made without thought or full understanding of all that they may demand from us. When we are warned to let our words be few, we are being told that it is far better to promise less and perform more than it is to promise much and perform little. A promise to God should be well thought out and a promise that we have every intention of keeping – no matter the costs. When you make a promise to God, be prepared to act on that promise as soon as possible. It is not pleasing to God when we do otherwise, and He considers such promises to be foolish. The term fool is not used in the Bible to describe those who *cannot* learn but those who *will not* learn. Empty promises are meaningless and show a lack of respect for God. When the poor are oppressed and justice is denied, it is usually because someone has not kept a promise to God to care for those with greater needs than our own. Kingdom Prosperity always provides enough to share.

Prayer Emphasis: Recall some past promises that you have made to God. **Act** on those promises at your earliest opportunity. Promises to God are important and should be fulfilled to the best of our ability. **Guard** your steps and be sure to live up to your Christian commitments.

Day 26: Ecclesiastes 5:10-20

“He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity.” (Ecclesiastes 5:10)

Never Enough!

It would be a terrible thing to live our lives pursuing things that simply will never satisfy us. Earlier in Ecclesiastes Solomon said, “All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full” (Ecclesiastes 1:7). Some translations state that the sea is “never full” or “is never filled up.” There are some things that can never satisfy us or cause us to say enough! Money is one of those things. When we become too attached to the things of this world, or measure our life’s success by our possessions, we are sure to stray from the most meaningful purpose for living. Sweet sleep comes to those who labor for the right reasons. Those who put their trust in what they have will never find the peace and contentment that brings true rest and satisfaction. When we trust more in what we have than in He who has so graciously provided it, we are sure to see our fortunes turned into misfortune. We are assured of one thing: We cannot leave this world with things that have to be carried out by hand. We only leave this world with those things that we carry in our hearts. Kingdom Prosperity is found in knowing that a life well lived is the greatest gift that we can offer to God. The safest investments that we will ever make are those that are made in heaven.

Prayer Emphasis: Refuse to participate in the race to see who has the most! **Give** God that which He truly desires – a life that is lived in devotion to Him and has been invested in eternal things. When we stand before God, we will all wish we had given more to Him while we had the opportunity.

Day 27: Isaiah 32:1-8

“But a generous man devises generous things, and by generosity he shall stand.” (Isaiah 32:8)

Compare and Choose

Isaiah had a special ability to compare the life that is lived in this world to the one that will be lived in the world to come. Each man (person) will have the opportunity to live in a way that will make an eternal difference in the lives of others. When we think in eternal ways, we live wisely and choose not to pattern our lives after those that are considered noble in this world, and we will no longer hold in respect those who are not choosing to live wisely themselves. Those who speak foolishly and busy themselves with evil by practicing ungodliness and spreading error will be ignored rather than immortalized as heroes in our lives and the lives of our children. When the rich and successful of this world turn deaf ears to the cries of the poor and devise schemes to gain all that they can from even the needy, they are called scoundrels and are considered wicked in God’s eyes. On the other hand, the obedient Christian makes more noble plans and performs deeds that are noble in the eyes of God. Kingdom Prosperity is about making wise choices and seeking God’s approval over that of our fellow man.

Prayer Emphasis: **Compare** time to eternity today and **choose** wisely to live for that which will exist long after this world has passed. **Honor** those who are worthy of honor and praise only those who stand firmly on doing the deeds of the Father. **Help** your children to recognize those who live for godly purposes as their heroes and “She”roes in life.

Day 28: Isaiah 32:9-18

“In a year and some days you will be troubled, you complacent women; for the vintage will fail, the gathering will not come.” (Isaiah 32:10)

Wise Women

God is faithful to recognize women for their significance and value to our society even when some societies during Bible times considered women to be of little value. One of the godliest roles that a woman can play is the part she plays in the stabilization of our homes and nation. Verse 10 warns us of the difference that a little time can make in our society and economy. We have all been witnesses to that in the events of our most recent years. Women who place their security in what they have may quickly see that security vanish. The wise woman wears well the finest of garments and the roughest of sackcloth. The wearing of sackcloth represents mourning and serves much the same purpose as fasting. It was a reminder that we are to be faithful to God in both the good and bad times in life. Without godly women our fortress walls soon fall, and our cities become as ghost towns. There is nothing that makes the home more secure and prosperous as the presence of a woman committed to obeying God. We have all heard the phrase, “When Momma isn’t happy then no one is happy!” I don’t know who first said it, but I will say “Amen!” to it. But even more so, we should understand that “When the woman of the house is happy in God, then the whole house will be a much more secure and pleasant place in which to live.”

Prayer Emphasis: **Recognize** the important role that women have always had in God’s Kingdom. **Praise** the women in your life for all the good that they do and bring to your home. **Thank** some godly woman for the testimony that her life has been to you and your family. **Do** something kind for a widow that you know and let her know how much she is loved and appreciated.

Day 29: John 11:1-11

“Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.” (John 11:1)

Mary and Martha

I am not sure why, but when I come to a place in Scripture where more than one name is given, I make note of the order of the names. In our story this morning, we find Lazarus described as being from Bethany, “the town of Mary and her sister Martha.” We are reminded that this is the Mary who poured her very expensive perfume on the Lord and then washed his feet with her hair. The details of this event are recorded in John 12. This act of kindness had apparently made such an impression on John that he could not mention Mary here without also mentioning this act that was later performed after Lazarus was raised from the dead. Regardless of who had the honor of first mention in this story, verse three tells us that it was the sisters of Lazarus who sent word to Jesus that their brother was sick. It is important to note that these women had a profound faith in the Lord and His love for their family. Even in times of sorrow, we should be reminded of how rich we are to have a Savior that loves us and one upon whom we can call in times of need. Mary and Martha recognized that Kingdom Prosperity is found in a *Person* and not in *possessions*. We would all do well to follow this godly example.

Prayer Emphasis: **Turn** to the Lord in times of trial and affliction. The Lord was most assuredly on the mind of these sisters, so their first words spoken about their problem was to the Lord. Mary and Martha acted wisely on this occasion, and we would do well to follow their example. **Involve** God in your current situation today!

Day 30: John 11:17-29

“And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.” (John 11:19)

Martha and Mary

Today’s reading once again includes the names of the devoted sisters of Lazarus, but now mentions their names in reverse order. Since we know Martha as one who was often busy serving others, we find her home soon filled with many who came to offer comfort and condolences to her and her sister after the death of their brother. When Martha received word that Jesus was nearing the house where they were gathered, she went out to meet Him. Despite her current situation, the first word that she said to Jesus affirmed His place in her life. “Lord,” she said, “if You had been here, my brother would not have died” (v. 21). This statement assured Jesus that this woman had an abounding faith in all that He could have done if only He had been there while Lazarus was sick. But what she said next must have been an even greater blessing to Jesus for Martha went on to say, “But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You” (v. 22). Such knowledge proved to be of great value to this family on this occasion, and it is still of great value to all who believe so strongly in the Lord today. Kingdom Prosperity rests not on the foundation of what *we* can do but on the strong foundation of what *God* can do!

Prayer Emphasis: **Ask** God to do for you that which you cannot do for yourself. **Remember**, when you know the Lord for who He is then you will most assuredly know all that He can do. **Seek** Him at all times and not just in desperate times. **Pray** for someone who is grieving and **reach out** to them, offering comfort or assistance.

Day 31: Psalm 37:1-9

“Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.” (Psalm 37:1-2)

No Reason to Be Jealous!

David tells us to not be envious of the seemingly prosperous people in this world. He goes on to say that their prosperity is as short lived as the grass that is soon to wither at the first sign of inclement weather. However, those who trust in the LORD and obey Him will dwell in the land and enjoy safe pastures. Because of this, we are to find our delight in God and all that He provides us. Furthermore, we are to be committed to Him to the point of trust, and He will give us something for which even the richest people on Earth will envy. He will make our righteousness as obvious and consistent as the rising of the Sun and will make our just lives shine down like that great light shines at its brightest. This is something well worth the wait because it sustains us when we see others who seem to prosper no matter how they live or what they are willing to do to obtain wealth. Don't allow the short-lived prosperity of the wicked to cause you to doubt God and His promises to the righteous. There is coming a day when evil men will know that they have made the wrong choices and they will envy those who have lived righteously as they see God bestow upon them the inheritance that only God can give.

Prayer Emphasis: **Be** patient and you will see that God has not led us down a path that does not bring rich blessings to all who choose it. **Praise** God for the eternal wealth that He gives you and let go of your grip on the things of this world. **Live** like a “Saint” and not an “Ain't” today!

Day 32: Psalm 37:10-21

“For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; indeed, you will look carefully for his place, but it shall be no more.” (Psalm 37:10)

It Won't Be Very Long

We sometimes forget how brief life can be. On God's clock it is still just a little while before this world passes away and only eternal things will remain. At that time, the meek will surely inherit the Earth and enjoy the blessing of peace. When the wicked rant and rave against God and His children, the LORD simply laughs at them because He knows that their days are numbered and that His day is soon to come. Verse 16 reminds us that the “little” that the righteous have is better than all the so-called wealth of the wicked. While their lives are far more fragile than they could ever imagine, our lives are safely held in the strong hands of our Father in Heaven. We must remember that our inheritance will last forever. In good times and bad, we rejoice because we know God will be ever faithful to provide our needs. The wicked love their money so much that they will be hesitant to even pay their just debts. On the other hand, the righteous have so much confidence in the goodness of God that they always find a way to be generous to those in need. Kingdom Prosperity is the only true prosperity, and it allows us to be a blessing to all those around us.

Prayer Emphasis: **Remember** that you cannot out give God and share generously with those who may benefit from your blessings. **Trust** God to do all that He has promised. Prosperity here may not necessarily mean prosperity in heaven if we base it on the standards of this world. **Ask** God to teach you the true meaning of prosperity.

Day 33: Colossians 1:1-10

“To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Colossians 1:2)

God’s Grace

Paul never ceased to stand amazed at the goodness of God’s grace. There are several things mentioned in our verses for today that should lead us all to be thankful for the grace that God has given us. First, Paul mentions his love and appreciation for his faithful Christian brothers and sisters (v. 2). He is thankful for their faith in God and their love for one another. Without the grace of God being shown to him, Paul knew that he would still be an outsider and persecutor of these same people with whom he now served. Then, Paul observes God’s grace at work as he witnesses the fruit that can come from a life committed to God (v. 6). Paul also sees God’s grace in those who give their lives as faithful ministers to the church (v. 7). Paul loved and admired this man who was obviously the pastor of the church there and referred to him as a “dear fellow servant” and commended him as a “faithful minister of Christ” (v. 7). But Paul had at least two more blessings of grace to mention. The first was for our ability to be filled with the knowledge of God’s will through spiritual understanding (v. 9). The knowledge of God’s will is more than the mere possession of facts. It referred more to the willingness to accomplish God’s will in our everyday living. Last, he thanked God for the way that grace could help us “walk worthy of the Lord” (v. 10).

Prayer Emphasis: Realize that only Kingdom Prosperity can be of long-term benefit to us in Kingdom work. **Acknowledge** that the wisdom of this world will not equip us to be servants of God. **Pray** for an opportunity to exhibit God’s grace to someone today.

Day 34: Colossians 1:11-20

“Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power...” (Colossians 1:11)

Real Strength

When we grow in God’s grace, we are strengthened from a source of power that is made available only to believers. This power is an enduring power that allows us to serve God patiently and joyfully while always giving thanks to our Father for allowing us to share in such Kingdom Prosperity. God’s people are to be ever reminded that He has “delivered us from the power of darkness” and brought “into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (v. 13). One of our many blessings is the fact that we have received forgiveness for our sins. As such, we are now living in a blessed relationship with Jesus, “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation” (v. 15). Just as the firstborn son had certain rights and privileges in this world, Christ has certain rights and privileges over all things. It is *by* Him that all things were created, whether things in heaven or on earth. It is also *for* Him that all things were created. He is the head of the church and in everything He is to have the supremacy. Everything found in God can be found in Christ Jesus. Our greatest asset is our relationship with God. We would do well to be constantly reminded of the price that was paid for our salvation.

Prayer Emphasis: Humble yourself before God. **Bow** on your knees before Him as your Creator and Redeemer. **Express** your appreciation for the forgiveness of sins. **Confess** any known sin in your life and seek His wisdom and strength for every aspect of your life.

Day 35: 1 Peter 3:1-12

“Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel— rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.” (1 Peter 3:3-4)

The Best Dressed Woman in Town

Peter could speak with personal knowledge about marriage because the New Testament reveals that Peter was both a husband and a preacher. In these verses he speaks of a beauty that is found in behavior and a sermon that can be preached without words. Purity and reverence are two adorning jewels that all women should wear. This letter appeals to the women in the church to let their beauty be exhibited from within and not just by their outward adornment. He encourages the women to let the true beauty found in their inner person to make their fashion statement. He speaks of the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. We know from the Scriptures that Sarah was a beautiful woman. However, Peter uses her as an example of those whose beauty is found more in their glory than their gold or garments. We all love nice things, but we must all remember that the most beautiful woman in town may be deemed so more for what is in her heart than what is worn on her hand or in her hair. Husbands should be thankful for a godly wife and see her as his most cherished blessing.

Prayer Emphasis: Allow God’s Word to determine what we consider beautiful and blessed. **Avoid** getting too caught up in the fashions and affairs of this world. **Realize** that we all want to look and be our best in life, but never forget that looks can be deceiving. People may like what they see on the outside, but they learn to love the person that you are within.

Day 36: 1 Peter 4:1-11

“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’” (1 Peter 4:8)

Above All...

Peter shares a deep, personal conviction with us in our verses today. He believes that the person who has experienced salvation should be done with sin and committed to living a life that avoids doing evil and pursues the will of God. Whatever time people spent living in sin was time enough in the opinion of this apostle. He lists some of the evil activities that are so prevalent in our world and says that those who participate in such things are often taken back by the fact that we do not join them in their pursuit of worldly pleasures. When they try to challenge your beliefs and ask you to defend your life choices, remind them that they will one day give an account to God and be forced to defend their poor choices in life. Their poorest choice, of course, was to not believe in Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of the world. Since that time of judgment is so soon upon us, we are reminded to, “above all,” love one another and be hospitable to one another without regrets or complaints. Each one of us is encouraged to use our spiritual gifts to serve others. When we do this God will be praised, and He will receive glory forever and ever. Peter had to say an “Amen!” to that and I think that I will do the same (v. 11). Amen!

Prayer Emphasis: Live every day like it is your very last. **Involve** as much of your life as possible in the work of the kingdom. Kingdom Prosperity allows us to be generous without fear of ever doing without ourselves. When we have and share love, we are the richest of all people.

Day 37: Matthew 1:17-25

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 1:18)

The Birth of Jesus

When we read Matthew 1:18, we are told how the birth of Jesus came about. Since we have faith, we may not think that an explanation is necessary. However, there are many living in our society who do not see this story through the eyes of faith and need to have it explained to them. Mary was “betrothed,” or pledged to be married to Joseph. This pledge, just like a marriage, could only be broken by divorce (v. 19). While in this time of betrothal, and before Mary and Joseph had ever been together in the act of love, it was discovered that Mary was pregnant. Joseph could have “put her away” at that time and was considering it (v. 19). However, his plan was to do it quietly and with as little disgrace for Mary as possible. An angel came and visited with Joseph and told Joseph the whole story. Mary had not been unfaithful to Joseph. The child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. She was to give birth to a Son, and he (Joseph) was to name Him Jesus. To help Joseph understand more fully, the angel reminded him of one of the most popular prophecies in the Bible about the Messiah. Joseph awoke from his dream and did all that the angel had commanded him. He kept his relationship with Mary pure until the baby was born, and he gave that baby the name Jesus.

Prayer Emphasis: **Thank** God for the gifts that cannot be purchased with money! **Remember** that Kingdom Prosperity is about faith, love, commitment, and devotion. **Give** these precious gifts to those that you love, and you will be blessed beyond measure.

Day 38: Matthew 2:1-12

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem,” (Matthew 2:1)

The Visiting Magi

We know very little about these unnamed wise men who have come to be such a large part of our Christmas Story. All that we know of them is found here in Matthew 2. They were probably astrologers and astronomers who came “from the East.” This leads us to believe that the writer himself knew little more about these men then than we do now. We speak and sing of “Three Kings,” but there is no reference in the Bible to their being kings or that there were three in number. We most likely based the number of the Magi on the number of the types of gifts that they brought to Jesus. The idea that they were kings was probably born from portions of Scripture like Psalm 68:31 and 72:10 as well as Isaiah 49:7 and 60:3. As far as we know, these strangers became the first Gentiles to ever worship the Christ. Although the Jewish world was slow to accept it, the Lord’s heart has always been for the whole world. We can learn much about worship from these early visitors. They gave God gifts of their time and talents long before they ever arrived in Bethlehem and opened their treasures. When they did give something tangible to God, it was given in worship and from the very best that they had. These may or may not have been “kings,” but they did understand Kingdom Prosperity.

Prayer Emphasis: **Give** something extra and special to someone this Christmas Season. Try to **do** something for someone who can give nothing in return. **Tell** the one(s) who receive that this is a gift from Jesus!

Day 39: Luke 2:1-7

“And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:7)

A Manger

God often uses circumstances to get us to the exact place He wants us to be, and at the exact time He wants us to be there. Such was the case with the birth of Jesus. God used a financial matter (a tax census) to get Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem of Judea, the town of David, so that the birth of Christ would be in accordance with the biblical prophecies of old. Nowhere in the angel’s message to Joseph (Matthew 1) was there any mention of where Jesus was to be born. Joseph was not going to Bethlehem Judea because he was told by the angel that he was to take Mary there or because he was trying to help God fulfill prophecy. He was going there because he was a tax paying citizen and fulfilling an obligation that had been thrust upon him. When he went, he took Mary, his pregnant, espoused bride with him. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be delivered. Because there was no room for them in the inn, Mary was forced to bring forth her firstborn child in an animal stall and, therefore, His first crib was a manger. From the very night of His birth, Jesus sent a very clear message that Kingdom Prosperity has nothing to do with how much we make, how much we have, or the beauty of the home in which we live.

Prayer Emphasis: **Count** your blessings today and keep counting them as the day goes on! **Thank** God for the many nice things that you have and that He has allowed you to provide for your family. **Praise** Him for the way that He provides your every need.

Day 40: Luke 2:8-20

“Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.” (Luke 2:8)

Shepherds

The flocks that were reserved for temple sacrifices were kept in the fields near Bethlehem. The shepherds who carefully guarded these special lambs were diligent to protect them from the dangers posed by thieves and wild animals. These sheep had a special purpose, and their purpose made the work of these shepherds a special job. How beautiful is the thought that the shepherds who hurried off to Bethlehem after receiving the angel’s message and hearing the heavenly host sing the praises of God might very well have been the shepherds who were assigned to carefully guard the sacrificial lambs that died to help people look forward to the One who was to come and make the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all mankind? These men, no doubt, had been told many times about the value and importance of these unblemished lambs. And they probably knew more about what these lambs represented than most of the others who went to temple worship. It is no wonder that they “came with haste” to see the One who was the true Lamb of God that would take away the sins of the world!

Prayer Emphasis: Use your every opportunity to worship the Lamb of God today. **Pray** to Him. **Give** to Him. **Bow** before Him. **Confess** your sins to Him. **Love** and **adore** Him. **Thank** Him for all that He is, all that He does, and all that He says. **Behold** the Lamb and know that He died on the cross in your place. Thank you for reading with us these past 40 days. If we can minister to you in any way, please contact us at 850-562-8069 or at gary@seminolebc.com.