

Lessons for The Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost

November 19, 2023

Psalm 90:1-12 ~ *Moses' prayer reflects on aging and ends with a plea for wisdom in evaluating life.*

Zephaniah 1:7-16 ~ *Those who think God does not care about their sins will surely be judged.*

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 ~ *God has given us salvation in Christ, so we may live in the light of His grace.*

Matthew 25:14-30 ~ *God calls upon us to invest His forgiveness through our lives of service.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: It's Time to Take a Risk!

Zephaniah brought God's word of warning to complacent merchants and rulers of Jerusalem at a time when they thought they could count on political and economic stability without figuring on God's investment! Jesus described the coming of the Kingdom in terms of a wealthy merchant who is looking for considerable returns on his investments. St. Paul reminded early believers that they have an inside track on the Kingdom market, living in the light of the grace of God, and so are able to risk faith, hope, and love to build up one another in a rich life for God just as Christ risked His life for us.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord Jesus, wake me up with the light of Your day so that I am not complacent or haughty about Your judgment. Make me aware of Your claim upon me so that I will be aggressive in my investment of Your love and grace in my life as I await Your return in glory. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: God has given us great material blessings and expects us to use His goods to build up His kingdom, not to advance our own gain or position. The faithful steward invests capital in the Master's business.

OFFERING PRAYER: What a privilege it is, Lord, to use the wealth You give
For the building of Your kingdom in the faithful way we live.
Keep us always watchful as we await our Lord's return
So we see and help the need we meet at every turn. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: On many occasions we have "buried our talents" – not being willing to risk our goods to advance the kingdom of God. The comfort we have is that God has invested us with great gifts, grace beyond measure. He has entrusted us with the message of Christ's redeeming love. While this parable sums up the warning of the unexpected return of the Lord and encourages faithfulness in our use of his gifts, it also points forward to Jesus' identity with the needy and outcasts, that we apply his investment of love toward their needs.

Questions to Consider: What is your risk comfort level?

- What is God's complaint with the merchants in Zephaniah's day?
- What edge do believers have as the day of the Lord approaches?
- How much of God's grace to you are you willing to invest in others?
- Why should our lives be patterned on God's risk factor?

Bonus: Next Page – Faith Tracks 2

(Here is what it looks like to take a risk of faith, trusting in God's plan and direction for investing our lives.)

FAITH TRACKS - 2

*For Marcia, on her new venture
with Christus Spohn*

Not knowing
how or where or when,
nor to what mortal end
your life was flowing,
 yet setting
out with confidence
that God alone made sense,
and humbly letting
 the Spirit
lead you on the way
by what God had to say
when you could hear it,
 now, nearly
stumbling, you look back
and see the winding track
of faith more clearly.

– Gilbert A Franke, 10/29/08