

Lessons for Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 18, 2022

Psalm 113 ~ *A hymn of praise to God who cares for the poor and oppressed.*

Amos 8:4-7 ~ *The Lord called to task those in Israel who oppressed the poor for their own personal gain.*

1 Timothy 2:1-15 ~ *Good works which should adorn our lives are prayer and care for kings and all people.*

Luke 16:1-15 ~ *We should use our resources as wisely to provide for eternity as we do for tomorrow.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: What is the Bottom Line?

The question is, how does it all add up? Speaking by his prophet Amos, God declared the bottom line to be not the amount of worldly goods we gather, but rather our kind and honest treatment of those in need. Jesus' parable teaches that the bottom line is how we consistently use our possessions for the good of the Kingdom. St. Paul wrote to Timothy that the bottom line is the ransom Christ paid for our redemption, which in turn moves us to work for peace through our prayers and possessions.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: I thank You, Lord, that You add the value of Your love in Christ Jesus to the worth of my life. Help me see that life is more than the sum total of what I have, that it is shaped by the way I use Your gifts to bring blessings of faith and wholeness to the unfortunate. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: The Shakers gave their "*Hands to work and Hearts to God.*" Can we do anything less than dedicate our gifts to support our prayers on behalf of "kings and all people" that they may be led to faith?

OFFERING PRAYER: With heartfelt prayers we come, O Lord, to ask
That You establish peace within our land,
And we will give our labors to the task,
And offerings, too, to see Your Kingdom stand. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: God has given us many resources, including our material goods and our prayer life, to use toward His Kingdom goal that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Instead we use our power and wealth to accumulate more and even attempt to use prayer to bolster our value. In contrast, Jesus expended all His worth, even His life's blood, to ransom us from eternal destruction. By God's grace we are given new opportunities to expend ourselves in the service of God's Kingdom of grace.

Questions to Consider: How would you budget God's grace?

- What does it mean to make the ephah small and the shekel great? (Amos 8:5)
- What kind of return does God expect on his investment in our salvation?
- How can you use "unrighteous wealth" to make eternal friends?
- When we recognize our moral deficit spending, how does God balance our budget?

Bonus on next page: Duty Diminished

Diminished Duty

Birthed by Creator's breath
placed eastward in Eden
destined to work the land
caring for creatures

agent assigned a task
managing life and habitat
renewing, restoring, repairing
conscious of duty

self-awareness evolved
now a specie of species
top of the food chain
goal is survival

no longer a steward
ravaging resources
plundering life
kill or be killed

Gilbert Franke, 5/1/2021