

FINANCES: REWARDED WITH OPPORTUNITY



April 22, 2012

Matthew 25:31-46, James 2:14-20, Isaiah 58:6-9

Bottom Line: *1 John 3:16 "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers"*

Items needed:

Get Started:

It's been pretty exciting around Kingsway, as families have talked about, planned, and began carrying out their plans in response to the challenge given last Sunday. The special offering of \$95,000 was given back to the congregation along with a challenge to increase that money in order to help others locally, nationally, and globally. Last week's focus scripture was from Matthew 25:14-28, as we learned about the joyful reward Jesus offers His obedient servants. Before we jump into today's scripture, how is the challenge going for you/your family? (Allow students to share victories, struggles, concerns. Guide conversations to encourage all and equip those who are struggling. Maybe even take some time to pray for your students/their families and the challenge.)

Get the Scoop:

Today we'll jump back into the conversation as Jesus turns our attention to the Final Judgement – and continues his admonitions to take our faith beyond intellect and into actions that benefit others.

Read Matthew 25:31-46, underlining or making notes of things that stand out to you in the passage.

Q: What verses stood out to you in the passage as you read it? (students can share in small groups, or share with the larger group.)

Dig In:

Once again, you'll notice Jesus calling attention to the hurting, poor, naked, hungry, ill, imprisoned... it was not uncommon for Jesus' listeners to come across people in these conditions on a regular basis.

(If you are able, share these pictures, taken to that show wealth/poverty in the same location.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/blanc100/3706898388/lightbox/>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/17/homeless-advocates-rally- n_1099451.html

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/littlesister/3793609267/>

(or find some on your own. The top one is from Hong Kong, but the bottom two are from Indianapolis.)

Between this passage and the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:29, I think it's fair to say that Jesus' listeners were guilty of seeing the hurting and walking on by. Maybe they were afraid of being unclean. Maybe they were confused as to how to help. Maybe they were nervous or unsure. Maybe they were haughty or selfish. We don't really know.

Jesus makes it clear that at the Final Judgement, He will separate the true believers from the pretenders. The real evidence of our belief is the way we act.

Q: How do you routinely treat people you come across in your day-to-day activities? (think grocery store, workplace, restaurant at lunch, school, etc.)

- Q: How would they describe you after you leave?
Q: How do you think they feel after spending time with you?

These questions are just the beginning to turning our hearts to an others-focus as we move in our world.

What we do for others demonstrates what we really think about Jesus' words to us...feed the hungry, give the homeless a place to stay, look after the sick...

Sheep and goats often grazed together, and Jesus' listeners would have been familiar with that practice. They were separated when it came time to shear the sheep.

- Q: How would you say your actions separate you from the pretenders?
Q: How would your *family* say your actions separate you from the pretenders?
Q: Your closest friends?
Q: The people at your work? Your neighbors?

This parable describes ACTS OF MERCY we can all do every day. They do not depend on wealth, abilities, or intelligence. Jesus demands our *personal involvement*; these needs are not things we can hand over to our government and hope for the best.

Read Isaiah 58:6-9.

- Q: Describe God's view of acts of mercy
Q: What acts has God described for you here?

Take It Home

Let's bounce back to our talent-challenge for a minute. We've been challenged to increase our talents so we can help people locally, nationally, and globally. Using those areas, let's filter this passage through those parameters.

- Q: Who do you know LOCALLY that is hungry, homeless, hurting, imprisoned, sick?
Q: If you don't know someone personally, do you know of an organization who does?
Q: How willing are you to invest in someone locally this week? Month?
Q: How can you make a difference for the hungry, homeless, hurting, imprisoned, sick nationally?
Q: How can you make a difference for the hungry, homeless, hurting, imprisoned, sick globally?

Q: Will you pray for God to open your eyes to opportunities to show mercy this week? He may show you someone with needs at Walmart...He may open your eyes to a need at your job, in your neighborhood, or across the country.

Q: Will you pray for God to show you if a national or global mission trip to help the needy is something you should consider?

Q: How can we pray for you as you dive into this mercy-giving lifestyle? What are some of the challenges you have faced or anticipate?

We are given many amazing opportunities to be Jesus to the lost and hurting. Our choices in those opportune times show our true faith. We will be challenged to move beyond our comfort zones. We will be rewarded with Jesus' blessing, inheritance, and eternal life when we live a life that reflects His love and mercy to those who need it most.

Prayer time

Pray in small groups for:
Opportunities locally, nationally, globally,
Courage in the face of those opportunities
Open hearts/minds when noticing the hurting in our day-to-day lives

