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Daily Devotional - Friday, December 28, 2018 - The Real Heaven

DECEMBER 28TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friday, December 28, 2018 - The Real Heaven

Matthew 25:14-30

FRIDAY

28

Trying to picture life in eternity, many people imagine lying around on clouds, strumming harps. I'm not sure how this misconception about heaven got started, but I can assure you that is unlikely. We have been gifted, equipped, and enabled to fulfill God's purpose in this life. And He will still have a purpose for us in the life to come.

In today's passage, Jesus described the kingdom of heaven in the context of a man giving his servants money to invest. The men who served their master faithfully were heartily congratulated and given greater responsibility. When we reach Christ's judgment seat, our foremost reward will be to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matt. 25:23 NIV). I can't imagine words that could please me more than a commendation from the Savior I love above all.

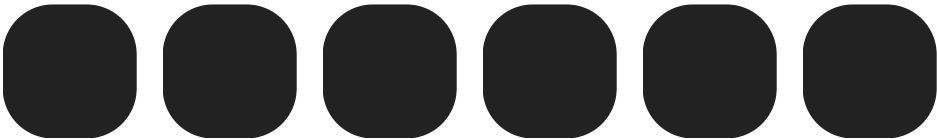
We will also receive our new assignment in God's heavenly kingdom. This is the part of the reward that corresponds to the words, "You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things" (v. 23). There will be no lazing about for us! We will have a renewed heaven and earth to live in and enjoy (2 Peter 3:13). In our perfected bodies, with hearts and souls attuned to the Lord, we will serve Him and each other.

God has a plan for every believer to pursue, and He has gifted each of His children specifically for that purpose. That plan requires our passion and motivation—on earth or in heaven. This world is our training ground for the greater life to come, so let’s prepare like good and faithful servants.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, December 26, 2018 - No One is Righteous

DECEMBER 26TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, December 26, 2018 - No One is Righteous

WEDNESDAY

Many people think that by trying to live a good life, they are guaranteed a ticket to heaven. They may say things like, “I’m a good person; I don’t steal, lie, cheat, or commit adultery, as other people do. I’ve never been to prison, and I always work hard and contribute to society. So why shouldn’t I deserve to go to heaven?” Notice that the focus is on “what *I* do.”

This is actually a false idea used by the enemy as a way to deceive people. The truth is that God does not accept anyone based upon works, and the reason is simple: Salvation doesn’t depend on anything we can achieve. Nothing you or I do can earn it. We are saved solely on the basis of what Jesus accomplished when He died in our place to set us free from the power of sin and death. That’s what salvation is about.

To truly know the heavenly Father, you need to be right with Him. Yet not a single one of us is righteous on our own. Each of us has sinned over and over, not only in words and deeds but also in the contemplations of our heart. We can’t boast of righteousness, even if we can boast of “good works.” But at the cross, Christ was dealing with our sin problem, not our works.

We came into this world as sinners, separated from the Creator by our self-centered nature. Jesus, through His grace, took the punishment we deserved when He went to the cross as our substitute. In that way, He makes it possible for everyone who trusts in Him to be made righteous. By receiving Him as the Savior, anyone can begin a new life as God’s child (John 3:16; Eph. 2:4-9).

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, December 18, 2018 - Those Who Hurt

DECEMBER 18TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, December 18, 2018 - Those Who Hurt

Mark 10:46-52

In the midst of suffering, we may question whether God cares or even knows what we're going through. However, the problem isn't with the Lord—it's with our perception. We tend to judge God by our circumstances, but we should judge circumstances by the Lord's character and the power He demonstrated in Scripture.

The Bible teaches that our triune God is omniscient and knows all things perfectly and fully. No actions or persons are hidden from His sight, and the past, present, and future are all laid out before Him (Psalm 33:13-15; Heb. 4:13).

The Lord "searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts" (1 Chronicles 28:9). Therefore, He knows us intimately and understands what we really need. God's love and concern for us do not change, even if our pain is the result of our own sinful actions.

Jesus repeatedly demonstrated God's love and care for people. In fact, much of His ministry consisted of alleviating suffering along with teaching how to enter the kingdom of heaven.

While traveling to Jerusalem in anticipation of the cross, Jesus encountered a blind beggar who kept crying out, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:48). Although the crowd told him to be quiet, Jesus stopped to restore his sight and affirm his faith.

And He will hear your cries for help as well because His love extends like a canopy over you. When your circumstances tempt you to doubt this, consider your limited perspective and trust in the character of your God. Accept Jesus’ invitation to bring your burdens to Him and find rest for your soul (Matt. 11:28-30).

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Daily Devotional - Friday, December 14, 2018 - The Words of Our Mouth

DECEMBER 14TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

James 3:1-12

FRIDAY

14

Have you ever considered what a wonderful gift speech is? When God created us, He gave us a voice and a language so we could communicate. With our tongues we can praise and glorify God, teach His Word, pray, and express encouragement and loving devotion to one another.

However, our voices also have the power to hurt. It often starts with something small, like a thoughtless comment that can snowball, causing unforeseen damage. At times we may express our opinion in a critical way, which tears the other person down. Or out of curiosity, we might ask a question or make a suggestion that sows seeds of doubt and distrust, thereby damaging another person's reputation.

Scripture calls this gossip, and God has strong words to say about those who engage in it. They separate close friends, betray confidences, and stir dissension. Most alarming of all is the fact that the Greek word for a malicious gossip is *diabolos*, which is also translated "devil." When we use our words to tear others down, we are acting like the devil rather than like Jesus Christ.

God takes our words very seriously, and so should we. Jesus said, "The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart" (Matt. 12:34). Therefore, what we need is a heart transformation, and the only one who can do that is God.

Since gossip is the opposite of love, ask the Lord to give you His love for others so you can be someone who protects reputations, covers sins, and blesses others with your words.

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, December 13, 2018 - Remaining in the Vine

DECEMBER 13TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, December 13, 2018 - Remaining in the Vine

John 15:7-17

THURSDAY

13

When Jesus gave the disciples His final instructions before going to the cross, He repeated a particular word. *Abide*—which occurs 10 times in John 15—isn't one we use often, but it accurately conveys the relationship between Christ and His followers.

Abide means “to remain, dwell, continue, endure, or tarry.” Can you hear the call to faithfulness in these words? Our relationship with Jesus isn't a onetime event of salvation but a long and steady walk with Him.

Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches” (John 15:5). This is a fact for everyone who has been born again. But He also tells us to abide in Him (John 15:4), signifying that we have some responsibility as branches in Christ. Therefore, it's essential that we know how to remain in Him.

Jesus says to let His words abide in us (John 15:7). Incorporating God’s Word into our minds and hearts is how we dwell with Him and learn to know Him intimately.

Obedience is another essential aspect of abiding (John 15:10). It’s like being an employee who obeys his manager’s instructions and does not take matters into his own hands. We are to rely on the Spirit’s direction instead of strategizing and making plans on our own.

Abiding in Christ also includes our relationships with fellow believers. Jesus commands us to love one another just as He has loved us (John 15:12).

God’s desire is that we bear much lasting fruit by abiding in Christ. This isn’t a sporadic endeavor done only when convenient; it’s an enduring commitment to remain in God’s Word and continue in obedience and love.

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