

**(For Monday, November 6, 2017) Today, how will you use what God has given you?**

*“Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God, and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For you will render to a man according to his work.” (Ps.62:11-12)*

I have noted before how, since at least the Protestant Reformation we have eschewed a theology of “Works Salvation” (the belief that you can work hard enough to earn your way into heaven). We’ve embraced in its place the conviction of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus as Lord. Yet, Scripture is full of accounts of how we will all have to provide a “reckoning” to God as to how we have lived our lives for him (or not!). This verse provides one way of how these two seemingly contrasting ideas can be reconciled, since the Psalmist declares that the power to achieve anything of Spiritual consequence comes from God. And how we use that power through a life spent in steadfast love for him and others will, in fact, determine the consequential sum of our life’s achievements.

So what will you do with the 5, 2, or 1 talent that God has given you to bless those around you?

**(For Tuesday, November 7, 2017) Tired of being a Scaredy Cat?**

*“Also they spoke of his good deeds in my presence and reported my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to make me afraid.” (Neh.6:19) (parallels with Nunc Dimittis)*

Tobiah was one of Nehemiah’s evil enemies. This villain was determined to stop the Prophet from rebuilding Jerusalem, and re-establishing faithful worship of the Lord Jehovah. And Tobiah kept fomenting lies, slander, and accusations against Nehemiah in order to create enough fear in the Children of Israel to disrupt the plans that God had laid on Nehemiah’s heart. The use of fear is a classic tactic used by Satan and his minions. One of the Canticles we use often in our services of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer is the *Nunc Dimittis*, which quotes another Prophet, Simeon, upon beholding the Christ Child. (See Lk.2:29-32) It begins, *“Lord, now you have set your servant free to go in peace as you have promised. For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior.”* The truth is, for the redeemed who truly has the face of Jesus before him/her day-to-day, we really have been set free from so much, especially fear. Because with Our Lord at our backs, of what indeed shall we be afraid?

Is there some persistent fear in your life that you need to cast away and lay at the foot of the Cross?

**(For Wednesday, Nov.8, 2017) ) Know anyone who’s given up?**

*“Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” (Rev.12:12)*

Satan is eternally enraged, because he knows his doom is sure. He is beyond all hope. It’s not particularly productive to dwell on what motivates Satan. I’m not sure we can comprehend the depth of hate at the heart of evil in human terms. But there are probably some parallels we can draw between the destructive character of the Evil One and people we might know who have given themselves over to a destructive life-style. Whether it’s addiction, infidelity, gluttony, or wanton greed, the individual caught in this kind of behavioral death-spiral has generally lost hope in something better. The Spiritual three-legged stool that Paul talks about of faith, hope, and love really supports the life of the redeemed. And if Satan can remove one of those supporting legs, the base on which so much of life is founded can come crashing down.

Is there someone you know who needs to re-find their hope? Kindness and encouragement, supported by earnest intercessory prayer is often an effective remedy in such circumstances.

[Type here]

**(For Thursday, Nov. 9, 2017) ) Is fear stunting your growth?**

*“And though he [Herod Antipas] wanted to put him [John the Baptist] to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet.” (Mt.14:5)*

The word “fear” is a tricky one in Scripture. Sometimes, when used in a sense of reverence it can have a positive connotation, such as *“Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”* (Ps.111:10; Prov.1:10, 9:11) But often, as in the case of Herod Antipas, fear is a motivation which comes from distrust, doubt, and deceit. Herod was living in an adulterous relationship with his brother Philip’s wife. And when John the Baptist had the courage to call his hand on this sinful behavior, Herod wanted to eliminate John, and silence his voice of rebuke. But Herod’s intentions were stymied by fear. The lesson here for us all is to reflect on what motivates certain actions we take. A person can be inspired by passion, or sympathy, or charity to do great things for God. It is more difficult to see how being afraid of something or someone is a Godly reason for the way we live.

Is fear of something or someone stunting your growth into a better, brighter more mature Christian man or woman?

**(For Friday, November 10, 2017) ) Ready for your part in the show?**

*But Jesus said, ‘They [the crowd] need not go away; you give them something to eat.’” (Mt.14:6)*

Jesus throws down a challenge here. And it’s really not as unreasonable as you might at first expect. Remember, four chapters before this one in Matthew’s Gospel, Our Lord had already sent out The Twelve to proclaim the Kingdom of God, heal the sick, cast out demons, and even raise the dead. (See Mt. 10:7-8) Having already done this, does rustling up a bit of food for people in the wilderness seem such a tall order for Jesus’ inner circle? I think the lesson here for you and me is this: You and I are actually to participate in bringing about the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth. Now we can argue till the cows come home about Dispensational Theology, or what kind of miracles happen in our modern world as opposed to those in Jesus’ day. But the key observation here is that salvation by grace through Jesus Christ is NOT a spectator sport. You and I are supposed to play an active role in bringing about God’s will for his children, a role God actually established for each of us from the foundation of the world.

So, have you discovered your part in God’s eternal drama of salvation? Because it truly is “The Greatest Show on Earth.” 😊

(Rev. James Barnhill blogs at [www.1thes511.net](http://www.1thes511.net))

[Type here]