

Text: Matthew 25:14-30

Theme: Did I Live My Life for Him?

November 19, 2017

Some, perhaps many of you may recognize these lyrics, “When it's all been said and done, There is just one thing that matters. Did I do my best to live for truth? Did I live my life for You?” When you think about it, isn't that the real question of the day, the question of life? In today's text, we find the parable of the talents. In simple terms, the parable is a lesson in stewardship, in using life to honor our God. As we consider this parable, we focus on the question, “Did I live my life for Him?”

I. Our very existence is evidence that we were created to live for Christ. A. Yet, many misunderstand why they are here. 1. Some believe they are here for self-gratification. It's the “me world” mentality, the thinking that says, “It's all about me. No one else matters unless what they do helps me. All that matters is that I get what I want!” Would God create the world for self-gratification, for us to focus on ourselves, for people to look out only for number one? Does that notion square with what you know about God? Logically, it makes no sense because it's simply not true. We're not here to please ourselves, to focus on ourselves. We are here to please our Creator.

2. Others believe they are here to keep God happy. Those who, at the very least, acknowledge the existence of God, frequently think their goal in life is to keep God happy. When you think about it, that idea is plausible. “If God has enough power to create the world, I sure don't want to get on His bad side! If God has control over what happens when life ends on this side of heaven, I better stay in good graces with Him because then I'll have a better chance of getting into heaven.” That may sound reasonable, but God's plan for your life, for my life, isn't to keep Him happy, to do x,y, and z so that we stay in His good graces. That's not our reason for living.

3. Still others believe that they are here to earn their way to heaven. Because that idea is so popular, many believe that's their purpose for living. “If I do enough of the right things, if I'm a good person, if I live a good life, God will take me to heaven.” It sounds good and because so many are doing it, it seems like the right thing to do, but it's simply not the right thing because it's not our reason for living. If we had to earn our way to heaven, could we do it? Would any of us ever have any assurance that we had done enough? If you want to chase after maybes, it might be a good plan, but to live for Christ takes us down a much different path.

B. It may be a common misconception, but we are here to live for Christ. 1. We live for Him by realizing time is short. Paul writes, “For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.” How many of us know how long we will live or what we will face before we leave? We'd like to know, but God doesn't tell us for good reason. His plan is that we make the most of each moment fully aware that tomorrow may not come. Today could be the end and because that's possible, He says, “Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today.” Life is short. By faith, we live for Christ by making the most of every day.

2. We live for Him by identifying our abilities. How many of you can do what someone else can do as well as they can do it? Your abilities are not my abilities and what I can do isn't the same as what you can do. In our competitive world, it's easy to think everyone else is the competition. But that's not how God created you. Notice the words in our Gospel, “To one he gave five talents, to another two, to

another one, to each according to his ability.” Did I catch that last phrase - each according to his ability? God created each of us with different abilities. We live for Him by identifying our abilities rather than competing with someone else.

3. While we're on that thought, we also live for Him by utilizing our abilities. To one he gave five, to another two, to another one. If you have five and I only have one but I use my one to the best of my ability while you rest on the laurels of having five, who did what God wanted? Until we use our abilities, they have no value. Until we use what we have and stop chasing after more, we cannot live our lives for Him. Whatever your talents, your abilities, Christ says, “Use what I have given you as best you can. When you offer your best, even if it's only one talent, you will give Me the honor and glory I desire.” If you have it, use it. That's living your life for Him.

4. We live for Him by encouraging others. In the last sentence of our Epistle, we find the words, “Therefore encourage one another.” Compliments may still be free, but they are only useful when we offer them purely for the sake of encouragement. We live in a discouraging world, a world filled with discouraged people. Your words, your actions, your random acts of kindness - you will never know how important they were nor how many people's lives you impacted with a simple word of encouragement. Because faith lives in our hearts, encouragement is a response that acknowledges the value of others, a response that demonstrates we are living for Christ.

5. We live for Him by building up one another. The other half of the last sentence in our Epistle says, “and build one another up.” Suppose each person's life were displayed as a duplo building block structure which increased in size only when someone else added blocks. Your life, my life, the lives of everyone we meet is a building. As we live for Christ, we choose to add those duplo blocks to buildings that represent the life of another person, not to earn favors or to get them to reciprocate, but simply because it's what we do in response to our faith. As simple as it may be, it's another way to show the world that we are living our lives for Christ.

6. We live for Christ by acknowledging that all we have is His. Those talents in our Gospel lesson, they belonged to the master who loaned them to his servants. All we have, all our stuff, it really isn't our stuff at all. It's all God's stuff, things God has shared with us in order to live our lives for Him. What God has given you, God is also waiting for you to use as a means of honoring Him. When we clamor to ourselves like the little child, “Mine, mine. That's mine,” Christ says, “It's a gift I've entrusted to your care. What are you doing with My gift?” As we remember that our stuff is His stuff on loan, we realize that how we use it demonstrates who we are living for.

7. So we return to the song, to the lyrics and we leave them as food for thought, “When its all been said and done, There's just one thing that matters. Did I do my best to live for truth? Did I live my life for Him?” Amen.