Last week, we discussed the importance of establishing a disciplined prayer life and how it is a vital part of our spiritual growth. We talked about although there is no standard form to pray, even though Jesus taught his disciples how they should pray…but it was more about the approach and their attitude towards prayers that matter the most. All of us can pray and should pray, at any time and in anywhere. As one theologian puts it, our prayer life is reflection of our faith discipline and our relationship with God.

 Throughout Jesus’s ministry, we’ve seen many of His followers, including His closest disciples would come to him and inquire about their personal salvation. They might be practicing their faith for many years (perhaps since birth) but deep inside their relationship with God may be very shallow and superficial. They would ask questions like, “what must they DO, what price must they pay in order to assure themselves a place in Heaven?” But unfortunately they were asking for the wrong thing, or maybe the right thing but with the wrong attitude or motivation. There’s absolutely nothing that we can do here on earth, to earn our ways to the kingdom of God, except to fix our eyes and our minds on things above, and to honor what God has already installed for us, and not what we want from God.

As we read in our text this morning, Paul offered the early church in Colossae a simple guideline when it comes to their spiritual living, a code of discipline of some sort. By the virtue of our baptism and our faith in Christ, we proclaim that our lives no longer belong in this world, but in the kingdom that is already here and yet to come.

As I shared with you last week, **the Kingdom of God is not some place where we would go after this life, but rather a renewed perspective, an existential experience or perspective of how we must live out our relationship with one another, and with God.**

When Paul wrote to the early church in that region, many were being polarized and influenced by other cultural, secular, and religious practices. Their personal integrity had been compromised and their faith became a spiritual battleground in a pluralistic society. I suppose we can all relate to this in the world and society that we live in today! There were many earthly temptations and forces of influence that can potentially sway us away from our allegiance towards the true God.

Paul was offering a stern warning to the early church in Colossae, out of his LOVE towards them that there were many forms of worldly temptations out there that may grant us temporary and materialistic pleasures…temptations that may lead us astray from our relationship with God. These earthly pleasures or temptations can easily influence our devotion and allegiance toward our God. In verse 8, Paul illustrated a few of these human behaviors that we must pay careful attention to. They are **anger, wrath, malice, slander, lying, and abusive language**. By no means this was an exhaustive list either.

 Paul reminded the church how they must stand their ground to their calling and to live out a life of holiness, in order to keep themselves pure. Focus on the larger mission of God, instead of what we see before us. “***As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”[[1]](#footnote-1)***

That’s the **Golden Rule of Christian Living**. Paul reminded the church that “it is never too late”. It is never too late to reset our life priorities, uphold and restore Christ’s values and priorities back in our lives and above all things. We must “***set our minds on things above and not on things that are here on earth!”***

 **To set our minds on things above means to look at life from God’s perspective and not ours.** As we read in our other Gospel lesson earlier from Luke, Jesus once again was teaching in the form of a parable. A materially rich young man wanted to settle his inheritance with his other brothers. He seemed to be running out of space in storing his excess earthly resources that he had accumulated throughout his life. But that’s not the core of the issue here…the real issue was his sin of greed and hoarding among earthly things, and his unwillingness to share what he has with those around him. His investment was on this earth but not on the Kingdom of God. This man in the parable has more than he needs…enough to last for “many years” to come, as our passage tells us. Yet, he was not content with what God has already given him. He wanted more! He wanted to build an even larger barn so that he can store more of his excess resources. The more the merrier, the bigger the better. Talk about the rich getting richer, while the poor neighbors are suffering and dying, yet he paid no attention to those around him.

Jesus differentiated those who stored up treasures for themselves but not riches towards God. This is materialistic versus spiritual. It doesn’t matter how big your barn if, if your life is shallow and build upon empty promises and false hopes. As God said to this rich young man, *“You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”*[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Instead of ignoring those who are in needs around us, Jesus taught us that we shall focus upon investing our time, energy, and resources in making God’s presence known, healing and restoring our relationships with others and with God.** Instead of asking “what is it for me?” A better question that we ought to ask ourselves is, “how can God use me in fulfilling God’s mission and purposes here on earth?”

The sin that Jesus pointed out to us, through this parable, wasn’t about having such overstock of resources, the sin rests upon us not sharing what God has given to us with others and the desire of wanting more than we need. **In God’s eyes, this is a form of idolatry of focusing upon our earthly needs while failing to place our trust upon God’s providence.**

**This is a matter of stewardship to the heart and part of our heavenly calling. Ultimately this rich man would learn that “he can’t take everything he owns with him”.** **There will NOT be any storage room for his earthly goods up in heaven.**

 **God has commissioned us to be witnesses and ambassadors**[[3]](#footnote-3) **in God’s kingdom that is already here AND also yet to come.** God desires us to be “rich” in heavenly things, while focusing our minds and our hearts on God’s ultimately mission. God does not want us to stockpile on earthly and trivial things in a barn that may be here today and be gone tomorrow.

 In a moment, we will once again come before this table of grace. We come, not because we are worthy or have earned our rights to be at this table but because we confess that we are in need of God’s grace and forgiveness. We come to experience a foretaste of this heavenly banquet that Christ has prepared before us. Through the breaking of the bread and drinking of the cup, Christ lives among us and reminds of who we are and whose we are. As often as we come before the Lord’s table, we come to remember, reflect, and rekindle this special relationships with our God and our neighbors. Through these earthly matters of the bread and wine, our bodies are physically fed, while we meditate upon the heavenly feeding that nourishes our souls.

Let us, therefore, set our minds on things that are above and not on things that are on earth.[[4]](#footnote-4)  In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Colossians 3:12-14* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Luke 12:20* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *II Corinthians 5:20* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Colossians 3:2* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)