

Day 22

Read: Haggai 1:3-9 – A purse with holes in it.

“3. Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: 4. ‘Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?’ 5. Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Give careful thought to your ways. 6. **You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.**’ 7. This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Give careful thought to your ways. 8. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,’ says the LORD. 9. ‘You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?’ declares the LORD Almighty. ‘Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house.’ “

Did you ever feel like you were getting farther behind every payday? No matter how much the raise, no matter how many bonuses or overtime hours you get, still your money does not go the distance. No matter what you try, you can’t get out of debt, and it seems each year you are farther behind than the year before. God says there is a reason. “You earn wages and put them into a wallet that leaks.”

In this particular case God says it was because the people of Israel prioritized their own houses more than the house of God. They robbed God of His tithes and offerings so they could buy a new kitchen, put up a garage, or buy new furniture. God will have a hand on your wallet one way or the other. Either He will be touching it to bless you or He will be touching it to take away from you.

Tithing teaches us discipline with money. It teaches us to make priorities and forces us to live carefully on a budget to honor God. When God is honored, He blesses. It is that simple. The Lord is not interested in rhetoric, that is, He is not interested in pledges of allegiance to His Lordship. God wants His Lordship to be demonstrated, not talked about.

I will never forget the day my old car broke down while married in college and with our first child. Finances were tight. My Opel’s clutch went out on me and it was my only means of transportation to my job. My wife and I raided our budget envelope and scraped enough cash to walk downhill a mile to the Buick dealer to buy the part I needed. It cost exactly \$42.00. I had on coveralls for working in the cold under my car on the street and decided to walk to the garage just like that. I took the money from my wife and walked the mile. When I reached into my overalls pocket to pay for the part, I realized that overalls don’t really have pockets; they are just straight-through pockets to hang tools on. My money was gone. I was in tears crying out to God. I begged the assistance of my brother-in-law and we both walked both sides of that mountain the entire mile. It was a windy day and we had little hope of finding the money, but we prayed. Then it happened. Bill found a twenty caught in a bush. Then I found another caught in a pile of leaves. We never found the two dollars. When we put God first he plugs the leaks!

Quote: *“If there is a leak in your budget plug it with God’s tithe.”* – Anonymous

Day 23

Read: Matthew 6:19-24 - God and “Mammon”

“19. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. . . 24. "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money (mammon).”

What in the world is “mammon?”

“Mammon” (**mammonas**) was an Aramaic word that personified money, or more specifically, greed for money. The problem with this is that **mammon is an evil taskmaster** and its ruler is Satan. Therefore, if you are worshipping and chasing after mammon, you are heading in the opposite direction from where you need to be going to protect yourself. This passage literally means that selfishness is an evil competitor to God Himself. The New Testament teaching is “You cannot be a slave to God (Theos) and Money (Mammonas).” The two are in opposition, one against the other. Money seeks to dominate and enslave us, while Jesus came to set us free from bondage. Tithing is God’s tool to loose us from the chains of our greedy hearts. The tithe, simply stated, is the tenth – one dollar out of every ten, straight off the top of all that we earn. It is not off the bottom, or the last thing we give to God, but the first thing. Tithing establishes the Lordship of Christ in our finances; it physically and visibly puts God on the throne in that area of our life. If we do not wrestle the god of Mammon into subjection to Christ there will be two Lords in our heart. (Matt. 6:24)

Tolkien’s, The Lord of the Rings

The Lord of the Rings trilogy by J. R. R. Tolkien is a wonderful allegory of spiritual truths. Tolkien said, “In making a myth... a story-teller is actually fulfilling God’s purpose, and reflecting a splintered fragment of the true light.” In other words disguising truth in a myth can sometimes surprise us with truth. Such is the case with the character Gollum. The story is about a lost magical ring that gave people power to control the world, but in actuality the ring controlled whoever thought he owned it.

Gollum was a self-centered creature who found the ring and held onto it with a death grip. It changed his whole life; attitudes, lifestyle, and physical blessings as well. He was often heard to mutter, “Its mine, mine, all mine. My precious, my precious.” All the while his body deteriorated, his hair fell out, and he became a horrible looking creature. The ring owned him though he thought he owned it. The ring he loved so dearly held him in a powerful grip of greed that ultimately ruined his former self, and cost him his life.

Quote: *“It came to me, my own, my love... my... precioussssss.”* - Gollum

Day 24

Read: Luke 12:23-24 – Consider the Ravens

“24. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! 25. Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”

Genesis 8:6-7 “6. After forty days Noah opened the window he had made in the ark 7. and sent out a raven, and it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth.”

Consider the crow, the raven. The Greek word is **korax** *kor'-ax*, meaning a crow or raven. The crow is a nuisance. It is a scavenger. It eats carrion or dead carcasses. It chases away other birds, it steals and eats their eggs from their nests, it eats seeds that have been just planted, it eats garbage and strews it across the landscape, and it perches in inappropriate places and leaves huge white droppings on everything. It is noisy, intrusive, irritating, and some of us think they ought to be shot on sight. Is it any wonder it is the first thing Noah tried to get off the ark?

Nobody I know likes ravens. They often depict an evil omen. Shakespeare, in Macbeth, says the raven "croaks the evil entrance," and in Othello the raven flies "As doth the raven o'er the infected house, " boding evil to all. We even have negative statements containing their epitaph: one of which is – 'he made him "eat crow." ' The crow is villainized in Edgar Allen Poe's dreary poem, The Raven:

*Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
'Tis some visitor,' I muttered, 'tapping at my chamber door -
Only this, and nothing more.' – Quoth the raven, 'Nevermore.'*

But Jesus said, 'Consider the ravens.' Most people don't like ravens, but God even cares for them as His creation. Ravens are smart. They can be taught to be pets and even talk. Ravens are persecuted and should be extinct by now but they live on. Why? They live on because God cares for them.

A raven can teach us many things. God chose to use him as a descriptive word, "onomatopoeia," meaning it is a word that imitates the sound it represents. The Greek word is **kraxo** (*krad'-zo*) means, "to caw" or "to cry out loud." It is used 59 times in the Bible to represent crying out to God. It is God's favorite "onomatopoeia" since He often used it to describe our prayer of urgency when we call upon Him in times of trouble. Who do you call (caw) to when you have a need? Consider the crows-ravens who call upon the Lord for their food and needs.

Quote:

"Who provides food for the raven when its young cry out to God and wander about for lack of food?" – Job 38:41

Day 25

Read: Matthew 6:28-30 – Consider the Lilies

"28. And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

Consider This:

The Greek word used here is **katamanthano** (*kat-am-an-than'-o*). It means to learn thoroughly, examine carefully, to consider well in precise detail, and to attentively fix one's eyes upon. Synonyms for this word are; consider, contemplate, meditate, muse, ponder, behold, discover, think about, focus on, study, research, etc. It is decidedly not the Lord's intent here for us to simply cast a quick glance at the lily. He wants us to spend some time considering it carefully.

Look at a Lily

The lilies of the field Jesus was referring to were the wildflowers of the Middle east, probably anemones (pronounced a-NEM-o-nee) which comes from the Greek word "anemos," meaning wind, thus windflower. They are rugged flowers despite the rough environments in which they have to live. Their colors are vibrant shades of red, purple and pink, with jet-black hearts ringed with white. An all-white anemone is rare. Anemones belong to the buttercup family. They usually have 3-inch flowers on 8-12 inch stems. The best cut flower varieties are "Mona Lisa" forms, which have large flowers and long, strong stems. Like most flowers they depend on bees and hummingbirds to cross-pollinate them. They are really very dependent on God's good care or they would never survive to the next season.

It's Spring!

Jesus' point was to observe God's creative care and design of these beautiful fragile and often overlooked flowers. I am sure he did not expect all of us to travel to the mid-east to see this species of flower. So let's think of something more familiar, **Consider the Crocus**. The genus Crocus is placed botanically in the Iris family. They are hardy perennial plants. These little guys are amazing. They are up before spring arrives. They peek their heads through the snow and ice, and still they are colorful and uncomplaining. They get stepped on, picked on, picked by children and adults alike but they still keep bouncing back. Consider all flowers. They do no work and suffer all kinds of hardship; drought, wind, rain, storms, ice and snow, yet they still continue year after year.

Does God love lilies more than me? Never! For only **we** were created in His image.

Quotes

"Flowers... are a proud assertion that a ray of beauty outvalues all the utilities of the world." - Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1844

"When you have only two pennies left in the world, buy a loaf of bread with one, and a lily with the other." - Chinese Proverb

Day 26

Read: Matthew 25:14-30 – The Ten Talents

14. "... it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. 15. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability...18. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money."

Stewardship is being a caretaker of what does not belong to you. It is not storing away the item entrusted to you for fear of losing it. It is necessary for a steward to be faithfully investing his trust so that it grows and brings rewards to his master. You are a steward of your income and assets. They are not yours to squirrel away. They are the Master's assets. Cautious and prudent are not always virtues when caring for the Master's wealth. Stewardship, according to Jesus, always involves a risk. Those who do not put their resources to work for the Master are not faithful servants. Fearful servants don't make good stewards. A great illustration of that principle is found in "The Reluctant Investor" by Donald M. Weill, called Real Estate Lament. It is humorous but makes the point. I think Jesus would have used it to make his point of the fearful steward who buried his talent.

Real Estate Lament

I hesitate to make a list
Of all the countless deals I've missed;
Bonanzas that were in my grip -
I watched them through my fingers slip;
The windfalls which I Should have bought
were lost because I over-thought;
I thought of this, I thought of that,
I could have sworn I smelled a rat,
And while I thought things over twice,
Another grabbed them at the price,
It seemed I always hesitate,
Then make my mind up much too late,
A very cautious man am I

And that is why I never buy.
When tracts rose high on Sixth and Third,
The prices asked I felt absurd;
Whole block-fronts bleak and black with soot-
Were priced at thirty bucks a foot!
I wouldn't even make a bid,
But others did -- yes, others did!
When Tucson was cheap desert land,
I could have had a hip of sand;
When Phoenix was the place to buy,
I thought the climate much too dry!
"Invest in Dallas-That's the spot!"
My sixth sense warned me I should not,

A very prudent man am I
And that is why I never buy.
A corner here, then acres there,
Compounding values year by year,
I chose to think and as I thought,
They bought the deals I should have bought.
The Golden chances I had then
Are lost and will not come again,
Today I can not be enticed
For everything's so overpriced.
The deals of yesteryear are dead;
The market's soft -- so's my head!
Last night I had a fearful dream,
I know I wakened with a scream;
Some Indians approached my bed --
For trinkets on the barrelhead,
(In dollar bills worth twenty-four,
And nothing less and nothing more),
They'd sell Manhattan Isle to me,
The most I'd go was twenty-three.
The redman scowled: "Not on a bet!"
And sold to Peter Minuit.
At times a teardrop drowns my eye
For deals I had, but did not buy;
And now life's saddest words I pen
"If only I'd invested then!"

- by Donald M. Weill

Thought

What are you doing with what has been given to you? No, you didn't earn it. God gave it to you along with the strength, wisdom, and skill that you needed. Are you putting it to use, sticking your neck out, investing it, or are you burying it?

Day 27

Read: Galatians 6:9-10 – Opportunity Knocks

“9. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10. Therefore, as **we have opportunity, let us do good** to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

Opportunity Knocks

The Irish Potato Famine (1846-1851) resulted in a 30 percent drop in the population of the west of Ireland. The prolonged suffering of the Irish peasantry had broken the survivors in body and spirit. John Bloomfield, the owner of Castle Caldwell in County Fermanagh, was working on the recovery of his estate when he noticed that the exteriors of his tenant farmers' small cottages had a vivid white finish. He was informed that there was a clay deposit on his property of unusually fine quality. To generate revenue and provide employment on his estate, he built a pottery at the village of Belleek in 1857. The unusually fine clay yielded porcelain china that was translucent with a glass-like finish. It was worked into traditional Irish designs and was an immediate success. Today, Belleek's delicate strength and its iridescent pearlized glaze is enthusiastically purchased the world over. This multimillion-dollar industry arose from innovative thinking during some very anxious times. - [Bits & Pieces, June 25, 1992.](#)

God says there is a harvest and we are in the middle of it. Harvests don't last forever. They are limited opportunities. We need to use the opportunities that God gives us or lose the moment.

QUOTES:

There was a very cautious man
Who never laughed or played;
He never risked, he never tried,
He never sang or prayed.
And when he one day passed away
His insurance was denied;
For since he never really lived,
They claimed he never died!

Work For the Night Is Coming.

Anna L. Coghill

Work, for the night is coming,
Work through the morning hours;
Work while the dew is sparkling,
Work 'mid springing flowers;
Work when the day grows brighter,
Work in the glowing sun;
Work, for the night is coming,
When man's work is done.

More Quotes

“In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity.”-Albert Einstein

“Opportunity is missed by most because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.”-Thomas Edison

“The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”-Winston Churchill

“Work while it is day for night coming when no one works any more.”-Jesus

What are you doing with the opportunities God is placing before you?

Day 28

Read: Ecclesiastes 11:1-6 - The Harvest: Ear of Corn

“1. Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again. 2. Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land. 3. If clouds are full of water, they pour rain upon the earth. Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where it falls, there will it lie. 4. Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap. 5. As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things. 6. **Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.** “

Stewardship is taking care of God's harvest. There are those who never get around to God's harvest. They are too busy with their own harvest to pay any attention to what God wants to do. The lazy man will not plow because it is too cold, or the wind is blowing, or it looks like rain. There is always an excuse for a lazy steward. Some use the flimsy excuse that they have so very little it is not in their best interests, nor would it be prudent for them to plant seeds of faith and give abundantly to God.

How many ears grow on a corn plant?

Different corn plants have different numbers of ears, but much of the field corn grown in Iowa was bred to develop just one large ear rather than several incomplete ears. This approach usually yields better total production.

How many kernels are there on an ear of corn?



The number of kernels per ear can vary from 500 to about 1,200, but a typical ear would have 800 kernels, according to corn experts. If everyone in the world were given an ear of corn as a starting place for a new economy how long do you think it would take for the redistribution of wealth? – Probably about a year or less. Within that year some will eat the entire ear of corn and be in poverty, others will save some of the kernels to plant in the spring to continue surviving.

Yet there will always be those diligent people who will excel in making the best use of their ear of corn. They will eat some, save some, invest some, loan some to another with interest, and in the end corner the corn market and become wealthy.

Guess what? Everybody has been given at least an ear of corn. It is whatever asset or income you receive. What you do with the little or much that you have will determine your long-term outcome.

Quote:

“Hide not your talents, they for use were made. What's a sun-dial in the shade?” - Benjamin Franklin