



SAINT MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*A Proper 28, Matthew 25 14-30
St. Mark's, Little Rock, 11-19-17
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Sometimes to read a very challenging book
it helps to have the Cliff Notes
not to avoid the book
but to help us engage it
because if we are confused
about the plot
or some character
or perhaps we've missed something
really important in the story
one of those of little yellow booklets--
yesterday's version of today's Wikipedia
can be a big help.

Today's lessons
as we near the end of the year of the church year
and as we think about the summation of time
are like Cliff Notes.
These little lessons together
give us a perspective of the long view of history
And they also give us a sneak preview
of the end of the story
which happens to be our story
so that we can begin to live now
with the end
already in mind.

For example,
The prophet Zephaniah
warns the corrupt leaders of Judah
that at the end of their story

the Day of the LORD as he calls it
gold and silver
and power and wealth
and worldly success and fame
will mean nothing

and then he goes on to warn everyone
that the nation is headed for disastrous consequences.

But in the next chapter
being headed for disaster
is not the same thing as disaster.

For in the very next chapter
The prophet also holds out hope
That if the humble people of the land,
will seek God in righteousness
God will yet
provide a way forward.

Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians
takes this OLD Testament tradition
the Day of the LORD tradition
and reworks it and reinterprets it
And he does so
in the light of Jesus
and Jesus' promise to come again.

No one knows when that will be, says Paul
It may be years and years and years or it may be tomorrow
And so he counsels the people of his day
Do not get complacent
For now is exactly the time
to live just as Jesus taught
Love for one another
Have faith in God.

For God has destined us, Paul says
not for wrath
But for salvation through our LORD Jesus Christ
Therefore until that day comes
Encourage one another
And build each other up
Indeed as you already doing.

And finally
In the gospel Jesus in his parable

pulls back the curtain of history
as he tells a story
about a property owner
who's about to go on journey.
He says before this owner or master goes away
He entrusts his most valuable treasure to his servants.
as he gives each of them
some of his talents.
Now you remember that even a single talent in those days
was worth a lot of money.
A single talent could be 75 pounds of silver
or even 75 pounds of gold--
a staggering sum in any age
a single talent of gold in our economy
would be well over a million dollars.
And in the parable the master gives all three servants talents.
One gets 5 talents,
another 2 talents,
and another gets 1 talent.
The master gives every servant
a vast treasure.

And this treasure
these talents can be traded, invested,
to make even more talents
And the first two servants
They do exactly that,
and the treasure already vast
multiplies even more.

The 3rd servant , however,
with the one talent
sees the world quite differently
than the other two.
The world is a fearful place for him
And its as though he has become a prisoner
in his own fear.

Its like he wakes up every morning
Thinking the stock market is going to crash today.
And so rather than invest the treasure
he buries it in the ground.
Out of his fear, out of his disbelief in his master

He buries it.
He thinks he's playing it safe
But in fact
As it turns out
he's not playing at all.

And In reality,
He's not even in the game.
Because the treasure that the master has given him
in Matthew's view
turns out to be the gospel.

For in Matthew
Jesus tells us this parable is not really about gold
Its what the kingdom of God is like
Its what the kingdom of heaven is like.

And at the heart of the kingdom
Is always good news
The good news that Jesus proclaimed
And gave his life for.

The good news that God forgives us
The good news that God loves all of us
the whole creation
unconditionally.

The good news that God's will for the whole the creation
Is peace and justice
Love and life
And that God will never stop
Until all these are accomplished.

And even when your life and the world
seem more like a cross
Remember,
Where we see a cross
God sees resurrection.

But here's deal
Like the 3rd servant
We will not experience these in our life
Until we take God's treasure from the ground
And receive it in our hearts.

And begin to give the good news away to others
especially to the least, the lost, the lonely
the poor

people who needs God's love more than even
we discover God multiplies it even more.

The more you give God's love away

The more you get

And The more share it

The more God multiplies it in your heart.

None of us can out give God.

Finally though here is where cliff notes

have at least one more thing

to teach us about the story of God in world

And that's this

just as back in school

if we read only the Cliff Notes

And never actually read the book

We miss out on the art

of great literature.

In the same way

If we always play it safe in life

And never actually step out in faith

And we will not know the joy

of our master.

But when we actually try to live it

When we get off the sidelines

And On to the field of faith

Even if we fail

The kingdom comes

And God reigns

We begin to hear

His words

Well done good and trustworthy servant

You've trustworthy in a few things

Let me put you in charge of many things

Come,

Know the joy of your master.