

January is a marvelous time to adjust your pattern of living with a goal making changes that will last the whole year long. That is why resolutions are somewhat popular in January, because it means “to resolve to follow through on changes that match your goals.” Did you make any New Year resolutions? Did your resolutions make the top-ten list?

Did you notice our theme for January? Stephen Covey used this title in his book, Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. His definition— “to begin today with the image, picture or paradigm of the end of your life as your framework of reference by which everything else is examined.” Look at the front of the bulletin and you will see 2 Corinthians 5:10, highlighting these phrases: “All must appear; judgment seat of Christ; receive what is due.” We will study a parable from Jesus that picks up on this theme and really teaches us something about standing before Christ at the close of our lives. Let’s read **Luke 19:11-27** as our Scripture for today.

Comparisons

* Servants & Subjects *

“So he called ten of his servants . . .” (verse 13) “But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don't want this man to be our king.’” (verse 14)

The word is translated citizen in many English Bibles. It is referring to the everyday person that lives in this world. The key description is found in verse 27 as the parable concludes, “But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me.” In Revelation these citizens are referred to as people whose names are not written in the book of life. Revelation 20:15 says, “If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

Servants equals believers. Most of the story is about servants like Zacchaeus. The setting seems to be in his home, where other followers of Christ were gathered; so Jesus used this opportunity to teach a parable. The sentence that clarifies what has just taken place in his life is found in verse 9 & 10, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” Zacchaeus was described as a son of Abraham, and that meant that he responded to God in faith, just like Abraham. Faith led to his salvation and makes Zacchaeus and those that have faith servants of Christ.

* Ten Cities, Five Cities & No Cities *

When the king returns, after a longer than expected time away, the story teaches that Jesus will meet with his servants. In verse 13 it says ten servants were given ten minas but only three servants were highlighted. These servants appear to have equal opportunity and equal potential.

First Servant — “The first one came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned ten more.’ ‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’” (vv. 16 & 17) The result? affirmation and significant reward.

Second Servant — “The second came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned five more.’ His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities.’” (vv. 18 & 19) The result? Reward and responsibility.

Third Servant — “Then another servant came and said, ‘Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.’” ✓ He believed in the king, but did not trust him ✓ His main concern was for himself ✓ He wasted his opportunity

* Small & Great; Little & Much *

“Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter . . .” (verse 17) “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:18) “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.” (2 Corinthians 4:17)

Conclusion: “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.” (1 Corinthians 15:10) What did John Newton call grace? Is this flood of God's mercy to save your soul and pay for your sins amazing to you? The more amazing grace is to you, the more powerful it works in your life. How will the grace of God work in your life as you begin today with the end in mind?

Reflective Questions:

1. Do you have any New Year resolutions this year? What would be some resolutions that might be especially important to make? How do you think God responds to resolutions?
2. What does the phrase, "Begin with the end in mind," mean to you? Why is that principle so important? Where do you find that in the Bible?
3. What encourages you about the parable that Jesus taught concerning the work of his servants? What stands out to you? Why?
4. How do you respond to the message of the Bible that teaches we will receive rewards one day from Christ, who affirms our service for his sake? Why will that be an especially exciting day and how could that possibly be a day when one might feel some sadness?

Reading Schedule for January 11 – 17, 2010

We are utilizing the 365 day reading plan from the [Life Application Bible](#). These are "key selections" from the Bible. Obviously we are reading in Genesis, which is the word for "beginning." In the first ten days of 2010 we have read about creation, the fall of man, the first family, the righteousness of Noah, the flood and have been introduced to the man of faith named Abraham. These chapters are so important in understanding God's heart for people. He would select a faithful man named Abraham to set everything in motion by introducing a covenant relationship that would be blessed by God. The blessing would be so great in Abraham's life that it would spill over to mankind as Abraham was blessed to be a blessing. We will continue to read about this incredible man of faith. As you read each of these Scriptures from Genesis, think about which verse stands out to you and what the Lord might be saying to you through it.

January 11: **Genesis 19:15-29** – "But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt." (verse 26) "So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived." (verse 29) I thought it was an interesting comment from the [Life Application Bible](#), that Lot's wife turned back because she was clinging to the past. She was unwilling to completely repent and move away from the sin that had obviously affected her life. We can't make progress with God as long as we are holding onto pieces of our old life. The New Testament says we have died to sin, why should we live in it any longer? The New Testament teaches that we set our eyes on the things above. At the beginning of this year, please let go of the past and set your eyes on what Christ has for you, which is hopeful and life-giving. How do you perceive the new year? What do you have to let go of from 2009? What does God asking you to embrace in 2010?

January 12: **Genesis 21:8-21** – This is following the reading schedule from the [Life Application Bible](#). Even though we are skipping around, we are landing on significant spiritual teaching that is found in this beginning book of Genesis. "Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation." (verse 18) These are the words of the Lord. They are about the destiny of Ishmael and his descendants. He would become a ruler of a large nation. One of Ishmael's daughters married Esau, Ishmael's nephew. Unfortunately, the Bible pictures the Ishmaelites as hostile to Israel and to God. Abraham took things into his own hands and it would be a thorn in his flesh and all of God's people throughout the Old Testament. What is the danger of getting ahead of God? Why do we want to work so hard at fixing our own problems instead of trusting in God's provision? If you would like to do more reading on the free son and the son who is a slave, go to Galatians 4:21-31.

January 13: **Genesis 22:1-19** – This story is a highlight for me. It is a foreshadowing of God's provision of his Son, the one and only Savior of the world. "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." (vv. 16 - 18) Abraham received abundant blessings because he obeyed God. We are blessed today because of the faith of Abraham. His willing sacrifice was a foreshadowing of just how God gave his one and only Son for us. What do you like about this story? What part of the story stands out to you? Why?

January 14: **Genesis 24:1-27** – "May it be that when I say to a girl, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'-let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master." (verse 14) I like the question asked in the [Life Application Bible](#), "Was it right for Abraham's servant to ask God for such a specific sign?" The sign he requested was only slightly out of the ordinary. The hospitality of the day required women at the well to offer water to weary travelers but not to their animals. The servant was simply asking God to show him a woman with an attitude of service. The importance of marriage is connected to finding a mate with the right heart. This is an example of finding the right mate based on character, not on beauty, even though she was beautiful. Why do we judge people by the outward appearance so quickly? Why don't we emphasize the importance of inner beauty and the character qualities that are godly? How might you look at people with an eye for what is inside rather than outside?

January 15: **Genesis 24:28-67** – The story continues with Isaac and Rebekah: "Rebekah also looked up and saw Isaac. She got down from her camel and asked the servant, 'Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?' 'He is my master,' the servant answered. So she took her veil and covered herself." (vv. 64 & 65) These are interesting verses as Rebekah and Isaac meet. When Rebekah learned that the man coming to greet her was Isaac, her husband to be, she followed two customs. She dismounted from her camel to show respect and she placed a veil over her face as a bride. There is honor in what Rebekah does. What does this tell you about Rebekah? Why is it important to approach people with respect? Why is respect such a rare commodity these days?

January 16: **Genesis 25:19-34** – This is the story of Jacob and Esau, which is probably familiar to you because of the birthright. "Jacob replied, 'First sell me your birthright.' 'Look, I am about to die,' Esau said. 'What good is the birthright to me?'" (vv. 31 & 32) Esau traded the lasting benefits of his birthright for the immediate pleasure of food. He acted on impulse and he would suffer long-term consequences to that choice. Why do we make quick decisions that are so important? What if Esau would have prayed about what Jacob had brought to him? What if Esau had been godly about his need, his connection to his family and his father? Why would patience and prayer have changed the outcome for Esau? What lesson do you learn from this story?

January 17: **Genesis 27:1-40** – This is another story that you are most likely familiar with. It is a story birthed in deception. The outcome is that Jacob does receive the blessing from his father. "May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed." (verse 29) I love the ancient theme of blessing. Gary Smalley wrote a book entitled [The Blessing](#). In [The Blessing](#) we learn about the importance of affirmation and forecasting a hopeful future. This is what Isaac did for his son Jacob. This is also an important aspect of being a parent to your children. Do you think your children have been blessed by you? How have you tried to live a life with your children that would propel them into the future with confidence and faith?

Prayers: Pray for the mission of our church – T: Transformation, I: Interconnection, M: Ministry, E: Evangelism, that we would be people who use our TIME effectively for God. May our purpose and mission expand and deepen in us.