

Jesus Said: Your Father Will Reward You

October 23, 2016

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: How Deep the Father's Love by Steward Townend

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship. You can go through it together or in groups in meditation and/or in prayer)

How deep the Father's love for us,	It was my sin that held Him there
How vast beyond all measure,	Until it was accomplished;
That He should give His only Son	His dying breath has brought me life;
To make a wretch His treasure.	I know that it is finished.
How great the pain of searing loss,	
The Father turns His face away,	I will not boast in anything,
As wounds which mar the Chosen One	No fits, no power, no wisdom;
Bring many sons to glory.	But I will boast in Jesus Christ,
	His death and resurrection.
Behold the man upon the cross,	Why should I gain from His reward?
My sin upon His shoulders;	I cannot give an answer,
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice	But this I know with all my heart:
Call out among the scoffers.	His wounds have paid my ransom.

Icebreaker

Would you rather have lots of money but no fame OR have fame but have little money?

Text for Discussion: Matthew 6:3-4, 19-21

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

What motivates us as Christians? Why do we follow Jesus and obey His commands to help the poor, give money, and forgive our enemies? These aren't trivial questions. God cares about why we do things; our motives. More than focusing on behavior, God cares about our hearts. One answer is that as we look at Jesus and His sacrificial love, we are filled with love and gratitude. An alternative answer, though, is that Christians are motivated by reward.

All people are motivated by reward. It's part of being human. We have a will, desires, and the power of choice. And Christians are no different. The New Testament is well aware that we're motivated by reward. It even appeals to this desire (Col 3:23-24, Phil 3:13-14). Paul himself isn't just mildly motivated by reward. He *strains* for the prize. Neither does Jesus condemn us for seeking reward (Matt 6:3-4). He appeals to this desire. Yes, He warns us against materialism, but He doesn't condemn the desire for treasures. Rather, He tells us how to get greater rewards (Heb 12:2). Seeking reward isn't just permissible; it is necessary and pleases God (Heb 11:2, 11:26, Rom 8:18, Matt 10:42, Luke 14:13-14)!

This can be an uncomfortable answer for why we seek God and are good. Doesn't it make Christianity selfish? Doesn't this go against the gospel of grace, as if our actions are rewardable and earn us something? Doesn't the promise of differing amounts of reward contradict Christ as our righteousness?

To make sense of this apparent contradiction, we must clarify what kind of reward God promises. So often, we pursue mercenary rewards, seeing an action as a means to an end, a desired reward. But what the Bible promises us are organic rewards, where the prize is a natural extension of the action and in effect, the "activity itself in consummation." And what is the organic reward of pursuing God? It is not the mercenary rewards of health, wealth, or prosperity. The organic reward is God Himself and the delight of relationship with Him. "I am... your very great reward" (Gen 15:1). Our greatest purpose – why we even exist – is to glorify and *enjoy* God.

If God is our reward, don't we all receive the same reward? Objectively, yes. But subjectively, the more we love God, the more we enjoy His presence and long to be with Him, and the more heavenly it will be to finally be with Him fully. Our heart follows our focus and actions. Focusing on heaven helps us to more deeply believe and experience that God really is our greatest treasure (Matt 6:19-21).

It's important to recognize that many of us don't experience the joy in Christ described in these passages. And God understands this. He speaks of reward because most of us must begin with mercenary rewards as we seek Him. And that's ok. These rewards are like tutors, helping us until we can – slowly, and over time – begin to experience a greater and more organic reward in Christ. We may do the things God commands but for other reasons – to not get in trouble, to alleviate our guilt, to become better people. We cannot yet be motivated (or even understand!) the proper reward, for there isn't language on earth to adequately describe it. But as we journey toward Christ, we will begin to sense God's presence, His boundless love, and His immeasurable worth. And we will be rewarded with joy.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

What motivates you?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- 1) Looking at Matt 6:3-4, 19-21, what stands out to you?
 - o When you think of the word "reward", what immediately comes to mind?
 - o Why do you think God appeals to our desire for reward?
- 2) What does it mean to have joy as a reward (Heb 12:2)? Does that sound satisfying to you? If not, what may be God's invitation for you in this season?
- 3) **Guiding Question:** What motivates you?
 - o What initially motivated you to follow Jesus?
 - o Where are you on your faith journey? Have you seen your faith change throughout your life? If so, in what ways?
- 4) What are some examples of mercenary and organic rewards in your life?
 - o Have you tasted or seen glimpses of a transition from mercenary to organic rewards? If so, how?
- 5) What does it mean to store your treasures in heaven, not on earth (Matt 6:19-20)?
 - o Practically, what does that look like?
 - o How can we help one another store up treasures in heaven?

Praying for One Another

(Here are some ideas from the study to help focus your time in prayer as a group. Use by themselves or along with other prayer requests.)

- Pray that we would delight and grow more and more in love with God; that we would see Him as our ultimate reward.
 - Pray that we would rest in the season that we're in; knowing that God meets us and knows us exactly where we are at.
 - Pray that we would take comfort and have peace in the Father's love.
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Reminder: Please encourage group members to consider attending:

New Leader Training

Saturday, October 29th: 9:00am – 12:15 pm

<http://pacificcrossroads.org/event/13/community-group-new-leader-training/>

Note: Attending does not commit you to leading, but if you are interested in leading a group this is the necessary first step.