

November 12, 2023

Romans 3:10-12:

“What’s It Worth?”

- I. Our Worth. Rm. 3:10-12
- II. The Worth of Calvary
- III. What’s It Worth?

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Dear Friends in Christ,

A thirsty stag went down to a pool to drink. As he bent over the surface he saw his own reflection in the water, and was struck with admiration for his fine spreading antlers, but at the same time he felt nothing but disgust for the weakness and slenderness of his legs. While he stood there looking at himself, he was seen and attacked by a lion; but in the chase which ensued, he soon drew away from his pursuer, and kept his lead as long as the ground over which he ran was open and free of trees. But coming presently to a (wooded area), he was caught by his antlers in the branches, and fell victim to the teeth and claws of his enemy. "Woe is me!" he cried with his last breath; "I despised my legs, which might have saved my life; but I gloried in my horns, and they have proved my ruin."

The moral of the story? "What is worth most is often least valued." This is, of course, Aesop's fable of "The Stag At The Pool." (Aesop's Fables, White Cloud Classics, San Diego, 2013, p. 81)

And so it is with many church people; so impressed with who they are and what they have. The evil foe attacks like a roaring lion, chases them to the woods of earthly pursuit and devours them (1 Pt.5:8). The only things that are left are regret, and ruin, and the eternal cry of, "I am in agony in this flame (Lk.16:24)."

This is our second stewardship Sunday. Once again we evaluate the worth of supporting this congregation. And what's so important is our understanding that this is our responsibility. The question for each one of us is . . .

WHAT'S IT WORTH?

I. Our Worth. Rm. 3:10-12

It seemed proper to me that we should first examine our worth to God. To do that means we start with our worth before Jesus entered our lives. For me, there have never been more sobering words from Scriptures than the following; keeping in mind that every word includes you and me:

"None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God
All have turned aside; together they have become worthless (that's the word
the self-righteous will not tolerate); no one does good, not even one
(Rm.3:10-12)."

Would you mind if we go back to the word "worthless." I've talked about this before. To be worthless is to have no value. I've recalled former members who were incensed by this Scripture; argued that it really did not mean what it really means! But that's how we entered this world. In and of ourselves we were of no value to God because of sin. This was our worth. Please stay with me.

The three volume set of "The Abiding Word" contains many excellent theological essays. The *Foreword* to the three volumes states, "(the Abiding Word) offers to the readers essays based on writings of our (Lutheran fathers) which were read at District conventions in 1945." The seventh essay from the first volume was written by Rev. Walter Geisler. He wrote: "Such is the pitiable state of all men by nature. An insurmountable mountain barrier of sin separates them from God (p.151)." He then cites Isaiah 59:2: "...but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear."

Geisler goes on to write, "(our) sins represent a debt enormous, beyond computation or calculation (Matt. 18:23ff). All must confess the words of the Psalmist: 'Innumerable evils compassed me about (I cannot count them). Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up. They

are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me (Ps.40:12-KJV).” We neither dictate anything to God, nor does He owe us anything; as He said to Job: “Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine (Job 41:11).” And that brings us to . . .

II. The Worth of Calvary.

The Worth of Calvary. As difficult as it might be for most to understand that we were are worthless before God, His love for us is incomprehensible. I cannot express how important the words given John have been to me. I pray the same for you. They’ve been stated from this pulpit many times

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God (because we haven’t, and even now we struggle with the sin that is still there and will be until the day we enter eternal life)... In this is love, not that we have loved God, but he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for sins (I Jn 4.9,10).

And once again that word *propitiation* is a word with the most glorious meaning: *the gift to earn God’s love and favor.* And this has been clearly revealed to us by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, as Paul writes of the Gospel: “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him’- these things God has revealed to us through the (Holy) Spirit (I Cor.2:9,10a).” To quote Geisler: “God’s wondrous plan for the redemption of the world involved a substitute who would take the place of the entire human race and render divine satisfaction for sin in their behalf (Abiding Word, Vol. I, p.152).” You know, whoever believes has eternal life. This is the worth of Calvary. The question is, what’s Calvary worth to us?

III. What’s It Worth?

In 2 Corinthians 9:1-5 is the account of “The Collection For Christians in Jerusalem.” Paul writes to the Corinthian Christians, “...for I know your readiness...So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead of you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction (that is, a gift expecting something in return - vv.2,5).” And then follows Paul’s directions for “The Cheerful Giver; and what he writes is powerful:

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (And then follows the promise) And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, “He (God) has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God (2 Cor.9:6-12).

The cheerful giver who sows bountifully will be greatly blessed. This doesn’t mean a person will become rich and successful, or that he will never have problems. God will provide and bless in many ways. And so, the question: “What’s It Worth?” What is everything God has given us in Christ worth?

The Lord states, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near (Heb. 10:24,25)." God's people are to meet together to worship to mutually receive His Word and Sacraments; to give thanks and praise for all that God gives us in Christ; to encourage one another to share the Christ with others, to help and comfort those in need; to "stir one another to love and good works."

Everything we do here takes time, effort, and, yes, money. The responsibility of how we use the time, abilities, and money God gives rests with us. Please forgive the repetition, but in the flurry and fury of life it's easy to forget.

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Our post sermon hymn is "Upon the Cross Extended." It's a beautiful hymn that expresses Christ's love for you and me. Please keep the seventh verse in mind; especially in these days: "Your cross I place before me;/ Its saving pow'r restore me,/ Sustain me in the test./ It will, when life is ending,/ Be guiding and attending/ My way to Your eternal rest." So, what is that worth - to you - to me?

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott