

## **Covenant UMC Bible Study Notes-- November 13, 2017**

### **Judges 4:1-7**

Deborah was a prophetess. God keeps calling people you wouldn't expect.

See how Deborah put her talent to work.

Deborah had a gift to communicate and persuade; she would give the message whether it was good news or not.

Courage was required to do what she did, stepping out in faith, especially for a woman at that time.

Because Israel had not completed the conquest, they took on the ways of the people already in the land. God would raise up a deliverer and the people would be restored. This happened repeatedly in the Book of Judges.

Stephen's speech in Acts 7 refers to the Israelites killing the prophets, but that did not happen to the prophets in the book of Judges.

People were coming to Deborah to have their disputes settled. This was not safe for her.

The Old Testament has examples of women who stand out with courage.

### **Psalm 123**

Like Psalm 121, this is a Psalm of ascents (pilgrimage).

We recoil at the idea of servants, but in that culture it was a way of livelihood.

People took good care of their slaves; they were an investment.

"The eyes of servants look to the hand of their master" (v. 2). Keep your eyes on the Lord.

Jesus talked about how to be a profitable servant.

### **I Thessalonians 5:1-11**

Paul is trying to reframe apocalyptic anxiety. Encourage one another, live into the faith.

Encourage one another. Faith and love are internal goals; encouragement is sharing. Do not live in darkness and fear.

The word "therefore" at the end of Chapter 4 connects the passage about the rapture in that chapter with the passage in Chapter 5.

Encouragement is one of the spiritual gifts.

We are to be encouragers of others. I love it when I get encouraged, but my call is to be an encourager.

What is Paul encouraging people to do? Stay awake. Truly listen.

In the church we are to get together and encourage each other, to lay a foundation. We need support from one another. Find out what God's words mean. You can't love your neighbor if you don't know who he is.

The theme is knowing. Deborah had to receive understanding from God. The Holy Spirit had to edify the Thessalonians. Do not harden your hearts. Remember.

Let your heart be softened.

In the passages from the Psalms and from Matthew we also hear this theme. People who wake up every day expecting the rapture, and it doesn't come, eventually walk away from the belief.

On waking, do we say "Good morning, Lord!" or "Good Lord! Morning!"

After praying for a long list of concerns for the day, do we end with the words "Help me get out of bed!"

What is drunkenness? We drink so we can forget, instead of reaching out for healing. It is an escape.

Remember another story Jesus told: a king leaves a servant in charge of his household while he is away; the servant gets drunk and abuses the other servants. We can get drunk on hypocrisy.

Sobriety is our responsibility.

Compare a sense of urgency with a sense of complacency.

We need the alertness of a servant, tending to the faith journey that we are on.

Be awake to someone's need for prayer.

### **Matthew 25:14-30**

We are working our way through the sorting parables.

A talent was a measure of weight, representing a value of more than \$1000. It was the equivalent of 6000 denarii (one denarius was the daily wage of a laborer; Matthew 20:2)

Be attentive to the value of the people around you.

The servant who was given one talent protected the money but was not profitable.

Israel protected its heritage from the past, but was not open to the new thing that God was doing. Is this also true of the church?

Jesus spoke of abundance (For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance... (v.29)). The exact same form of the Greek word translated "abundance" is used one other time, in Matthew 13:11-12. In Chapter 13 the meaning is knowing. Since the first use of a word defines its meaning, this is also the theme of today's passage in Chapter 25. The talent was a weight of currency. Those without ears to hear will hear the story as being about money, but the story is really about knowledge. We are supposed to increase in knowledge and multiply by spreading it. We are all supposed to spread the good news.

Paul tells us to encourage one another, to share with one another.

The one with less knowledge was timid about sharing it.

"And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth" (v. 30). No grace is extended to the one who was afraid.

He didn't act on what he knew.

There seems to be little wiggle room for grace. Why didn't the one with more talents encourage him? Verse 30 shuts the door of recovery.

We must allow people to go to the deepest depths of their addiction. Don't rescue them. No one could do anything for him, only the grace of God.

This is a parable, not real people. It is a warning. Paul also gives warnings.

The parable is a reflection of the church today. Some churches do a lot and God blesses. Some have a little and God blesses a little. Others protect what they have; they

live to themselves, saying to some people, “We don’t want you.” “We don’t want those kinds of people.”

We have the capacity to give or deny mercy. If we have trouble forgiving, at least we can ask God to show them mercy. If you can’t do anything else, you can show mercy.

It’s a call, a charge. Live it fully.

A person with little is careful with what he or she has.

A parable reveals to some people and conceals from others. To the disciples it was given to know. We should find a meaning in the parable other than the money. The mystery of the Kingdom is that it will be delayed, and there will be a church in the meantime; it will go to the Gentiles. In Chapter 25, Jesus is near death and has to wrap it up. He is teaching us how to be prepared for the end of the Church Age.

It is your choice to be cast into darkness. Remember the parable of the lost sheep: there is always room for grace. We have to reach out of the darkness and request it.

The kingdom should feel different from normal life.

When you invest, you risk. Our church’s risk tolerance is very low.

There needs to be mercy shown when something risky doesn’t work out.

Like the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16), people say “we’ve been at this church stuff a long time.” God will answer: “Did I rob you to bless others?” It’s not zero-sum.

When we share knowledge, what are we risking?

We are afraid that someone will tell us that we are idiots.

We need to understand how limited is our role in evangelism. We are to tell the good news; that’s it. It’s not about trying to change someone’s heart.

Once we receive good news it doesn’t stop there. We need to be living witnesses. Some people don’t want to hear words. Love them.