

## Devotions for January 10-16, 2011

### **Monday, January 10, 2011: *Priorities* Daily reading: Proverbs 16:16-18; Mark 7:20-23**

In the U.S., we create 4.5 pounds of waste per person per day, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. This equals 1,642.5 tons of waste per person, per year. Are we really praying for our daily bread? What do we mean by daily bread? To petition “give us this day our daily bread” allows us to repent in those areas of our life that have skewed priorities. We often love our things, but find it hard to love the people around us. We place our trust in temporary things and orient all our energies toward them. We often define success in monetary terms, and wealth in dollars and cents. Instead, we can learn to appreciate the wealth of our relationships and invest our lives in others. Where do you have skewed priorities? Pray for God to show you what they are and lead you to real change.

### **Tuesday, January 11, 2011: *Landfill* Daily reading: Luke 16:1-9**

There’s good news and bad news about landfills. The good news: according to the EPA, the number of landfills in the United States dropped from 7,924 in 1988 to 1,754 in 2006. The bad news: landfill capacities have increased enormously. The EPA states in its 2006 municipal solid waste study that, “while the number of U.S. landfills has steadily declined over the years, the average landfill size has increased. ... Since 1990, the total volume of MSW going to landfills dropped by 4 million tons, from 142.3 million to 138.2 million tons in 2006.” This is remarkable, considering that the U.S. population increased by more than 50 million people during this time. As Christians, we have a lot of “junk” that gets in the way of us stepping into the movement of God in the world. We have every kind of excuse for why we can’t engage in God’s mission in deeper ways. What “junk” stands in the way of you engaging with God’s mission in a deeper way? Ask God to help you navigate this landfill.

### **Wednesday, January 12, 2011: *Nameless* Daily reading: Luke 16:19-31**

The story of the rich man and Lazarus, found only in Luke, is a study in deep contrasts. What’s unique about this story is that the beggar, Lazarus, is named. That intensifies our concern for the poor man; makes it personal. It illustrates how God cares for the poor, and how God is completely aware of their plight. The rich man is nameless and faceless, and could be any rich person. Isn’t it interesting how this nameless person seems to have everything in life, but has nothing in death? Isn’t it interesting that Lazarus is named and known, and has everything in death, while seeming to have nothing in life? How do you view the “poor” in our society? Ask God to help you identify with the needs of the lowest among us.

### **Thursday, January 13, 2011: *Heart* Daily reading: Luke 16:19-31 again**

The rich man calls to the great patriarch of the Jewish faith, and asks for Lazarus to be sent to give him some relief from the heat of his agony. Several points are worth noting. First, the heat of the torment may well depict the intense agony of what it means to be confined to the underworld, knowing that God exists and knowing that you are not in heaven. Second, the rich man knows who Lazarus is. During his time on earth, the rich man knew that the poor man was out there and had needs. He even knew his name. Third, the rich man’s view of Lazarus has not changed since death. The rich man still views the poor man as someone beneath him who might be sent to give him relief. This reveals the rich man’s lack of heart. Are there people in your life who you view as “beneath” you? In your prayers, ask God to correct your lack of heart.

### **Friday, January 14, 2011: *Excuses* Daily reading: Matthew 6:11; Matthew 19:16-22**

As we pray “give us this day our daily bread,” we must consider what this means in the context of our relationships with others. When we ask questions about our skewed priorities, those priorities should always begin with the relational question. Perhaps this story is less about how are we going to miss hell, and more about how we shouldn’t miss the opportunity to provide for others. Perhaps the “wide and gaping landfill” has something to do with the excuses we throw out preventing us from being the hands and feet of Christ. In Matthew 19, another wealthy person is confronted with the reality of what it means to follow Jesus. What excuses have you created that keep you from connecting with God’s mission in the world?

### **Saturday, January 15, 2011: *Will* Daily reading: Romans 1:8-12**

The image of the landfill is very potent, serving as both a tactile and metaphorical reminder of all the junk that we accumulate. What junk gets in the way of our reaching out to others? “What’s in your ~~wallet~~ landfill?” In the story, there is a chasm between Lazarus and the rich man. This leads us to ask how we get across the chasm between where we are and where God wants us to be. In the story, the chasm was bridged through conversation. How do we open the conversation about how God’s will is being done through us now? Paul longed for the day when he could see his friends in Rome again, but there was much standing in the way of that happening. What chasm, or landfill, separates you from the things you long to do? Ask God to bridge that chasm and set you free to do God’s will.

### **Sunday, January 16, 2011: *Opportunities* Daily reading: Luke 16:19-31 once more**

The story is intensified because, while the details could be reversed in life on earth, they are permanent in this scene of eternity. Abraham tells the rich man that what he is asking Lazarus to do for him now, in death; he could have done for Lazarus in life. This is ironic, and perhaps the point. The story ends with a cryptic note pointing to the crucifixion of Christ, and a dark and tragic comment about how we frequently miss the opportunities to serve that God sets before us. Where are the opportunities that you are missing? Ask God to open your eyes to the possibilities of service all around you.