

## Reading Schedule for October 29-November 4, 2018

There is nothing like reading about the life of Christ. Jesus is the focal point of the Gospel according to Matthew, but is also the focal point of our study in Hebrews. May this week encourage you to walk more closely with your Savior Jesus.

**October 29 – Matthew 25:14-30:** “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’” (v.23) There are several aspects to this parable that are impressive to me. But the one that I notice most readily is the statement from the master to the one who turned five talents into ten talents. And then the same identical statement to the one who turned two talents into four talents. This clearly shows that what was important was not the amount earned, but faithfulness in utilizing their gifts and fulfilling their God-given purpose. Jesus is pointing to eternity with this parable, as well as the other parables in this chapter, helping us to realize that how we live life now matters in eternity. Faith as stewardship in this life will result in greater opportunity and responsibility in the life to come. That is surely what it means. I am inspired by this parable every time I read it. How are you inspired by this parable?

**October 30 – Matthew 25:31-46:** “I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” (v.36) I’ve always been concerned about the prisoner, and one of the main reasons is because Jesus mentions it so clearly in these verses. I have also noticed that many of the strongest people in the Bible ended up in prison. Joseph in Genesis; Jeremiah the prophet; John the Baptist, as Jesus called him the greatest person to have lived; and the Apostle Paul, just to mention a few. There are many important aspects to this teaching, but the idea of ministering to prisoners has become more real to me, as we have a vital prison ministry at New Harvest. I am delighted to participate with the team of volunteers and their heart for inmates and their families. This is just one aspect of living out your faith according to Jesus. The profound aspect of this teaching is that when you do this kind of ministry for people, Jesus says, “You’re doing it to me.” In other words, in caring for those in need, the godly person discovers that their acts of compassion for the needy are the same as if for Jesus himself. That is an amazing truth. How do you respond to that profound message?

**October 31 – Matthew 26:1-16:** “From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.” (v.16) I appreciate the story about Jesus being anointed as a sign of his pending death, but I am also taken by Judas. Today is Halloween, and there are aspects of Halloween that are obviously dark and scary. The American culture is fascinated with this holiday, and yet I keep the idea of Halloween at arm’s length. Our family made costumes and participated in the church parties that were fun and even used as an outreach for the Gospel. But overall, Halloween has this underworld dynamic to it. There is no doubt that Judas was influenced by the devil. John, in his Gospel, says that very clearly. Be aware that you have an enemy, and he wants to bring you down. The Bible encourages us to resist the devil and he will flee from you. Stand on the powerful name of Jesus and you will be secure.

**November 1 – Matthew 26:17-30:** “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (v.28) I am looking at the meaning of Communion, and wanting to affirm this practice as we feel led to make the

Communion meal available every Sunday. The message that the cup is connected to the new covenant in Christ’s blood is very significant. The cup portrays the shedding of Jesus’ blood, who would take on our penalty through his death. This new covenant is very significant, even as the prophet Jeremiah highlights it in 31:31-34. You may benefit from that supplement reading today. The forgiveness of sins is especially significant. Sin is what separates us from God. To have your sins cleaned is a profound truth that brings freedom and incredible hope. I encourage you to thank God for the wonder of forgiveness and for the sacrifice of his Son dying in your place.

**November 2 – Matthew 26:31-46:** “Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.’” (v.39) There is so much in this one verse about what Jesus was experiencing. He was very sorrowful, and turned to his Father in prayer. The account seems brief to me because I believe Jesus prayed for at least an hour. Jesus said, “Won’t you pray with me one hour?” I have taken great comfort in Jesus’ honesty and the depth of his prayer before the Father. I sense the amazing courage of Jesus as well. This was decision time, and he decided for me in the Garden. One of the most profound prayers in the Bible is, “Not my will be done, but your will be done.” You could apply that prayer to your life in many ways. What comes to mind when you think of praying, “God’s will be done?”

**November 3 – Matthew 26:47-75:** “Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?” (v.53) Ever since I looked more closely at the mention of angels in the Bible, I’ve been impressed how often they have been identified in Matthew’s writing. As I was studying Hebrews and the message that angels are ministering spirits for the saints, I did a little bit more investigation and found that there are over 200 references to angels in the Bible. Since then, I have thought about angels being all around me. Jesus said that 72,000 angels were at his disposal. I suppose that would still be true for even me. Even if I would just need 72 angels, I would be protected, built up and helped by angels. Even in this dark time of Jesus’ arrest and trial, I sense that he was buoyed up by angels, even as he was in the Garden of Gethsemane. Do you have any thoughts about angels? How might your perception of their ministry increase?

**November 4 – Matthew 27:1-10:** “I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.” “What is that to us?” they replied. “That’s your responsibility.” (v.4) I am feeling sorry for Judas, because I know that he could have been restored. And yet his shame and remorse were so great that he ended his life. Betrayal seems greater than denial, as we read about in Peter’s life. But nonetheless, Judas could have repented. But he did not have a change of heart, only self-centered remorse. Peter was restored; Judas went away. In 2 Corinthians 7, we read about godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. Godly sorrow is genuine repentance, and worldly sorrow is feeling bad for yourself. You can tell the difference in Peter and Judas’ life. You and I will have reason to feel sorrowful because of sin. I encourage you to confess your sin, turn to God, have a change of heart, and he will restore you.

**PRAYER: Let us begin the month of November with thankful hearts for all the good things that God has done for us.**