

# **“All in a Day’s Work”**

**Matthew 20:1-16**

**Proper 20-A, Sept 24, 2017**

For any of you who are **Major League Baseball fans, the name “Ty Cobb”** is more than likely—very familiar—to you because Ty Cobb is considered to be one of the greatest baseball players of all time.

He first signed on to play centerfield for the Detroit Tigers when he was only 18 years old in 1904. When he was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1936, he received more votes than that of any other player whose name was on the ballot. Ty Cobb is even accredited for setting 90 MAJOR LEAGUE RECORDS—and to this very day—he holds the highest batting average ever of .366.

**Ty Cobb’s personal life, however, tells a different story.** Only three weeks before this young man began to play baseball for the Detroit Tigers—a terrible tragedy struck his home. His father was shot to death by his mother with a pistol his father had purchased for his wife.

How did this happen? Somehow Ty Cobb’s father conceived the idea that his wife was guilty of some type of marital infidelity. So coming home, late one evening, when he told his wife that he would be out of town, he was sneaking around to back of the house—hoping to catch her in a compromising situation—even though she was alone in that bedroom.

But when she saw the shadow of a man appearing in her bedroom window, she opened her nightstand. She took out her pistol and fired a shot into the window. 20 minutes later she was horrified to learn she had just shot her husband to death.

Although she was acquitted in 1906 of having committed any crime, this whole episode caused a very dark cloud to hang over Ty Cobb’s head for years!

Although Ty Cobb is remembered for his great success as a player in Major League Baseball; reportedly Ty Cobb was not regarded to be a nice man by people who genuinely knew him; and certainly not by those authors who first wrote biographies about his life!

Some said that he was an overt racist. Others pointed out the fact that he had a very bad temper and that he would erupt with unbridled anger like a volcano; with these instances even taking place a few times on the baseball diamond.

Throughout his life, Ty resisted every single witness to the Gospel that so many of his Christian friends had attempted to share with him. But when Ty Cobb eventually found himself on his deathbed in 1961 at age of 75, he strangely enough summoned for a Christian pastor to come and to visit him in his home. After listening intently to that pastor’s witness to Jesus Christ, Ty Cobb asked the parson: “Is it *really* true? Can all of the sins I have committed throughout my life—actually be forgiven me and washed away in the blood of the Lamb? Can my record really be wiped clean? Can the debt that I have incurred against a holy and a righteous God actually be expunged completely?”

The visiting minister said, “Yes, Mr. Cobb! It’s true! It’s all so gloriously and wonderfully true!” So immediately Ty Cobb confessed his sins to the Lord, in the presence of this visiting clergyman, who pronounced the forgiveness of sins to him. He also received the sacred washing of Holy Baptism!”

The visiting minister who was that day was also invited by Ty Cobb’s family members to officiate at Ty Cobb’s funeral and based on the solid promises he had read for many years as given to us in the Bible, that pastor looked at that very large crowd of people and assured them that: “Ty Cobb had now passed through the pearly gates, just as surely as if he had been a Christian all his life and taught Sunday school for years!

BUT YOU KNOW, MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS, THE QUESTION THAT SO MANY PEOPLE LIKE TO ASK WHENEVER THEY HEAR A STORY LIKE THIS? THEY ASK: “Why then, shouldn't I just go ahead and live out a life of sin and wait until the very last moments of my life to repent of my sins and still be welcomed into heaven? After all, if you're going to get the same reward, why not party hearty right up until the last moments of your life and then repent of your sins and receive God's forgiveness?”

They might even point out to you that there is a precedent for such an approach to life that is given to us in the Bible, though they know so little about the book! Wasn't this the personal request that the thief, who was dying on the cross next to Jesus, made to our Savior: “*Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom!*”

And Jesus responded to that man: “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:42-43)!

I. THE FIRST ANSWER I WOULD OFFER UP IS THAT NOWHERE DOES THE BIBLE TEACH US, THAT ANY HUMAN BEING'S LIFE—LIVED OUT IN THIS WORLD—TOTALLY GOVERNED BY HUMAN SIN, COULD EVER, IN ANYWAY EVER, BE MORE REWARDING AND MORE SATISFYING—THAN A LIFE LIVED OUT UNDER THE RULE AND REIGN OF ALMIGHTY GOD—A LIFE THAT ALWAYS COMES TO US AS THE TRUE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST IN THIS WORLD!

Oh, make no mistake about it—sinning is something that most human beings—including Christians would find enjoyable—especially when and while they are sinning—and especially also since the devil always does his very best to conceal from us, during such times, what the consequences of our sins will actually look like!

Yes, even the Bible admits that sin—while we are participating in it—can be a very enjoyable experience, but the Holy Spirit of God is always cautioning us against sins' consequences.

One of my favorite Bible passages concerning this whole matter is a passage that is found in Hebrews 11:24. When Moses learned as a young man that he too was an Israelite—he could have continued to deny—his truest identity—and live out a life of luxury as the adopted son of the Pharaoh's daughter!

But in Moses' mind that would have been sinful, though from a worldly perspective that approach to life would have made perfect sense!

In Hebrews 11:24 we read: “*By faith, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin!*” The writer of Hebrews goes on to tell us in the New Testament, tells us: “*Moses considered abuse suffered for Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the reward!*”

Moses was obviously, therefore, no doubt, not only looking ahead to the future reward of the Promised Land upon this earth, but also to an even greater even reward, of his one day, being welcomed into heaven. Why not wait, therefore, until you find yourself on your death bed, before you would receive Christ as your personal Savior and Lord?

II. ISN'T A SECOND ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION—BECAUSE WE WOULD END UP FORFEITING SO MANY COUNTLESS BLESSINGS THAT OUR FAITH IN CHRIST BRINGS TO US ALREADY WHILE WE ARE LIVING OUT OUR LIVES AS PILGRIMS IN THIS PRESENT WORLD?

Maybe it is a question that you have never been asked, of if you have been asked, you've never really taken much time to consider and to prayerfully answer! But what would you change about your life, if you discovered that you were suffering for 3 or 4 days from some type of spiritual amnesia, and you suddenly came to believe that there really is no such thing as eternal life and no such places as heaven and hell?

Would you, overnight, suddenly become less loving towards your family and closest friends?

Would you then make a willful decision as a married person to then cheat on your husband or to cheat on your wife? Would you suddenly become much more susceptible to practicing dishonesty? Especially if you were guaranteed that there is no way you could ever possibly be caught and that the amount of money you now have at your disposal would absolutely triple in three years?

Have you ever heard that old saying: “Virtue is its own reward”?

This saying contains a very powerful truth, doesn't it? Hopefully there are many more reasons why a married couple would do their best to keep their wedding vows faithfully to one another and many more reasons—why men and women—who serve as powerful leaders in business and industry—would want to run their business organizations in very ethical ways—besides the fact—that they want to totally avoid God's punishment!

Rather they would want to live in obedience to God's Word because living in our obedience to God's commandments always brings to us the greatest blessings in this life! I am not saying a problem-free life, but a life that trusts God for his strength, his power, and his presence to become especially real to you during those times!

A Christian author named Hannah Moore wrote these powerful words one day: “No one on their deathbed has ever repented for having become a Christian! Although we are not perfect, God is willing to give us enough wisdom to perceive that there really certain laws that must govern our lives—just as surely as the law of gravity governs, to a very large degree, our lives upon this earth! By the grace of God, we WANT TO LIVE IN OBEDIENCE to God's laws not only to glorify our Creator and Redeemer, but also because one's obedience to God's commandments always brings to us its own rewards! PSALM 1. Confession: For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ have mercy upon us, forgive us, renew us and lead us that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways to the glory of your name!

Why all of the events that took place in Jesus' parable today—were all events that took place: All in a day's work. Even as Jesus rescuing us from our sins took place: “All in a day's work too!”

God, who is not bound and constricted by space and time as we are—a thousand years are as a day, and a day is as a thousand years. Open chapter of Genesis: God created the light, and separated it from the darkness—1<sup>st</sup> day. Gathered the waters up into the sky, separated the waters—2<sup>nd</sup> day. Vegetation, plants flowers, 3<sup>rd</sup> day. Sun and the moon, stars—4<sup>th</sup> day. Birds and fish—5<sup>th</sup> day; Cattle, sheep, livestock and mankind on the 6<sup>th</sup> day—God rested.

God's greatest work was done in a day's time too, when Jesus died for all of us on the cross. Here's one more question I am hoping we might address together today!

IF GOD WANTS TO BE GENEROUS WITH OTHERS, WHO COME TO FAITH IN HIM, BY HIS GRACE, IN THE LAST HOURS OF THEIR LIVES—SHOULDN'T WE ALSO BE WILLING TO REJOICE WITH THEM AND ALONGSIDE OF THEM?

Well, on a day when my sermon has centered on some pretty heavy theological questions, I was hoping to momentarily lighten things up for you, just a bit, by my closing my sermon with the story about another deathbed confession that assures us that God's ways are much higher than our ways and that God's thoughts are much higher than our thoughts! It's about a conversion that one day took place between a dying husband and his wife!

One day a man named Jake was on his deathbed. His wife Susan was maintaining a vigil, right there on the bed with him, sitting by his side. She was holding his fragile hand, while tears were running down her face. Her praying out loud, however, aroused Jake from his slumber! This is precisely when he looked up at Susan and when his pale lips began to move ever so slightly!

“My darling, Susan,” he whispered.

“Hush, my love,” she said. “Sush! Rest! Don’t talk!

He was insistent, however. “Susan, he said with a very faint voice. I have something that I must confess to you if I am going to die in peace!”

“There’s nothing to confess,” replied the weeping Susan! “Everything’s all right, my love, go to sleep!”

“No, no! I must die in peace, Susan. I have to confess to you that during the course of our seven-year marriage, I once shamefully had an affair with your best friend and more recently I have had shamefully had an affair with your sister!”

“I already know, honey!” Susan replied to Jake. “That’s why I poisoned you!”

How grateful we are to the LORD God almighty, that he one day spoke to us those precious words that we hear from the Prophet Isaiah in our Old Testament lesson today!

Here, the LORD God says: *“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts! Amen*