

12th Sunday After Pentecost
Wicker Park Lutheran Church
Rev. Jason S. Glombicki

August 7th, 2016

So I have this problem: Sometimes on my day off I sleep in late; then, when I finally get up, I know there are a lot of things to get done – laundry, grocery shopping, cleaning, exercise, and make meals for the week. I know I have one day a week to cram it all in, but it's only 9am - I've got the whole day, right? So, I make tea, listen to the news, play around on Facebook, and check Instagram. Suddenly my phone dings – it's 11am, and spin class is in 15 minutes. I run around, get ready, take the class, and walk outside into a beautiful day. Naturally, that means it's time for a walk! Before I know it the time is 3pm, I haven't showered, done laundry, cleaned, gone to the grocery store, or cooked before I have dinner plan. My day has gone haywire. Why? Because I wasn't clear on my priorities for the day.

Today's gospel reading is also about priorities. Jesus called us to prioritize our lives and activities in a way that gives eternal life. It's a call to center, or even re-center, our lives on God and that which matters. While this might seem extremely difficult in our world of competing interests, it is essential for our lives as Christians.

Let's unpack today's story to get a better glimpse of what's going on. First, Jesus finished up a vignette on money, which started back in verse 22. In today's reading Jesus echoed how he started that vignette by saying, "Do not be afraid, little flock."

"Do not be afraid" – this is not what the world reminds us. What does the world say we should fear? (Take a second to think. Anyone want to share?) We hear that we should fear immigrants because they might take our jobs. We hear that we must fear Muslims because they

might kill us. We hear that we should fear Trump. We hear that we should fear Hillary. We hear that we should fear walking on the streets of Chicago because we might get mugged or shot.

Sure, there are many things to fear in the world, but here again in Luke we're reminded not to be afraid of being coerced by our God. After all, it's God's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. It's God's divine pleasure to *give* you the kingdom. Not to make you work for it, in some kind of work righteousness way. You don't get the kingdom if you do, say, and be everything that is correct. No. That's not what Jesus is saying here. How do I know that? Well, you see in Greek, the verb expressing "divine pleasure" stands in the aorist tense. What does that mean? It means that God's decision is a completed action in the past. In other words, God's delightful decision has already taken place.¹ We're not working to convince God that we're good enough; instead God has *already* delighted to give us the kingdom. So don't let anyone try to make you think you earn God's kingdom or that you earn God's favor, because you've already got it. How life-giving is that?!

Ok, but then what's up with the rest of this stuff about selling everything? Yeah, okay, let's keep going. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Be careful here because it's not where your heart is there your treasure will be. No. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Two quick things:

First, "treasure" what does it mean by that? Sure, Jesus is talking about money here – so we think gold, silver, jewels, and diamonds, which are a girl's (or boy's) best friend. We can also take that noun and make it a verb, like when we explain how we treasure or value a particular item, for example a photograph. As a verb we can treasure something that might have little to no monetary worth to another. When it says treasure here, it means what you value or what you prioritize.

¹ Carlson, Richard P. *Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary: Feasting on the Word; Year C, Volume 3*. "Luke 12:32-40 – Exegetical Perspective." p335-339.

Second, when it says “heart,” it doesn’t mean the organ in your chest. It means your emotion, feeling, *and* your intellect. You see ancients didn’t separate our head, our heart, and our gut as we often do. Emotion, feeling, and logic were all seated in one place, the heart. The ancients recognized how intertwined these three were in a more holistic way than we sometimes do. So when it says, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,” it’s saying, “where you put your priorities is where your whole self can be found.”

This, of course, does include money. After all, I care way more about something that I’m financially invested in. “Where your treasure is, there your heart *will be* also.” Where we also spend our time and what we spend our time thinking about is where we find our full selves. We’re more likely to notice the homeless person, when we’re looking for the homeless person. We’re more likely to notice racism when we talk about racism. We’re more likely to notice sexism when we talk about sexism. We’re more likely to love others when we prioritize loving others. We are more likely to find our full selves in what or where we place value.

Today’s gospel challenges you to ask, “Where are my priorities?” Do you have them in the right place? Do you spend your time doing things that you value, because remember: “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Summer is the perfect time to do a little reflecting on our priorities, especially on vacation. Being away from it all can allow us to stop and to reflect. Pretend you’re on the beach or in the wilderness and take a moment to think about your priorities, where are they? Do you even know what they are? Can you name them? Do you need to do some soul searching this week to either find them or re-align them? And how do you know what *is* important to value? I’m going to leave those questions rhetorical for now, so we can see what else Luke has to say.

If the next few verses are any clue to our priorities, it doesn't look easy. We heard that we need to be alert with lamps lit and dressed for action. Now, that can feel like a command or an invitation. One author suggests that the difference between a command and an invitation is only in how it strikes you. A command can feel like coercion, and invitation feels like freedom. Remember, the kingdom is already yours, so this last part of the text isn't about justification, but rather it's about vocation.² You already have the promise of the kingdom, and a promise *always* leads to freedom. Always. Because we've have the promise that God's divine desire is to give us all good things, we are freed to give it away, to care for others, to love ourselves in service, and to find our security and confidence not in our earthly possessions or accomplishments but rather in our relationship to God.³

Or to put it another way, using the words of David Foster, everyone worships something. Everyone has a choice to choose what to worship or prioritize. If you worship money or things, you will never have enough. If you worship your body, beauty, or sex, then you will always feel ugly, and when time goes by you'll age and die a million deaths. If you worship power, you constantly will be weak and afraid and need to seek more power. If it's intellect you worship, you'll always feel stupid and a fraud. You see, these are the unconscious things we treasure, or, as Foster puts it, the default things we worship. Every day we fall into this default mode. Every day we need to be reminded, and every day our God reminds us of this default mode. As Foster puts it, "the really important kind of freedom involves attention and awareness and discipline and being able to

² http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2950

³ <http://www.davidlose.net/2016/08/pentecost-12-c-what-would-you-do/>

care about other people and to sacrifice for them over and over in myriad petty, unsexy ways every day. That is real freedom [and] the alternative is unconsciousness, the default setting, the rat race.”⁴

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Jesus shares the example of being dressed for action to emphasize that we have been given everything good and so that we can see the world as an abundant gift from a generous God. **Neither sharing nor receiving is possible when our hands are grasped and fingers clenched.** In discovering where our priorities are, we discover where our “full self” is located. If we prioritize giving, serving, and being ready to serve, then we too have our hands open in a readiness to receive. As one author reminds us: “Human sinfulness encourages us to believe that giving, instead of taking, will lead to destitution, deprivation and desperation. The gospel promises, however, that giving from what we have *will* make us mindful of the God of blessing and ready to receive the gifts God offers... The less we want to have, the less we need to have. The less we need to have, the less we need to fear. The less we need to fear, the more we know that a life of giving allows us always to live, not on the brink of destruction, but on the brink of blessing,”⁵ where we can readily hear that our God comes to bless us and bring us peace.

So, there it is. Where are your priorities? Do you put your value in things of this world? Do values of status, money, success, and perfection leave you afraid? By nature, they do. Put your treasure - your values - on “being” and not “having.” Put your priorities on things such as God, service, grace, acceptance, openness, and love and then you *will* live life eternal. “For where your treasure is, there your heart is also.” Amen.

⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhhC_N6Bm_s

⁵ West, Audrey. *Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary: Feasting on the Word; Year C, Volume 3*. “Luke 12:32-40 – Theological Perspective.” p334-338.

