

Worship for July 30, 2022

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

Isaiah 40:31

Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

They shall mount up with wings like eagles,

They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

We come to worship the holy One who meets us where we are.

We come to open ourselves to God, who lifts us up.

*Hymn 32 I Sing the Mighty Power of God

Prayer of Confession and Old Testament Reading

Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

Men: Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

Women: If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, who could stand?

But, there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.

All: My soul waits for the Lord, more than those who watch for the morning.

More than those who watch for the morning.

Hymn 698 Take, O Take Me As I Am

Assurance of Forgiveness

O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is great power to redeem.

It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

Believe the good news of the gospel. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Be at peace.

Time With Our Young Disciples

Gospel Reading

Luke 12:13-21

Morning Message

It was on a Christmas Eve in the mid-1960's that I learned the ugly truth about my dad and my three uncles on that side of the family. They were thieves. Their crime? They conspired to ruin Christmas Eve for the rest of us who had gathered that night.

My grandmother always hosted Christmas Eve dinner at her house. Everyone contributed, but, she took on the biggest part of the meal preparation. And, though all the dishes were good, one thing was all by itself...her graham cracker pie. Truly. I've sampled graham cracker pie every time I've encountered one since 1974 and none can compare. There were always graham cracker pies on Christmas Eve. The best.

But back to the theft. To insure that they would get enough pie to satisfy their appetites, the men in the family had absconded with the graham cracker pies. After all, there were cake and cookies a-plenty on the dining room buffet. "Let them eat cake!" I'm sure one of them must have exclaimed.

Dinner was served and enjoyed. Then my grandmother suggested we hold off on dessert until we opened our Christmas presents. There was an immediate whine from the kids' table. She relented and said it would be ok to help ourselves to one of the giant sugar cookies from the buffet.

Soon after, the living room was covered with paper and ribbon, the kids playing with new toys. My grandmother handed each of the women their gifts, then said to the men, "Boys, you'll have to help me with your gifts." And she led them to a closet where she removed four graham cracker pies...and handed one to each of them.

I can still hear the laughter bursting from my mom and my aunts as they realized what had happened. And I can still see the sheepish expressions on the men's faces. They were busted. Grandmother had been onto them the whole time. And the most remarkable thing of all was that she never scolded or shamed them for their transgression. She poured herself a cup of coffee and sat down with us and enjoyed a piece of purloined pie that had suddenly shown up.

In total, there were six pies on the table that night. More than anyone could eat. Where some had anticipated scarcity, there was abundance.

I always cringe when this text comes up in the lectionary. I may not grow wheat or build barns to hold it on our property, but, I have far more stuff than I need. In fact,

I have more than I can ever use or even keep track of. Speaking only for myself, I think it could be classified as sinful.

We know the folly of the man in Jesus' parable. How much you identify or don't identify with him is a matter of examining your own conscience. I'm the last person in the room to judge. Which is why I'd like to set the parable aside for a moment to consider the deeper issue Jesus raises:

“This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be? So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

It is awkward to preach about wealth, money, possessions, legacies. And yet, one scholar says that one out of every ten verses in the gospels is about the human quest for treasure, power, or position. The Greek word for greed is “pleonexia.” It means the “insatiable desire for more.”

In our culture, earning, spending, saving, investing are all vital components to our economy. At times of economic peril, we may be encouraged to spend, get some more money circulating for everyone's benefit. Recently I mentioned something about my iphone needing a new screen and my husband immediately said I was due for an upgrade and we should go shopping for a new phone. This is life as we know it today. All of which contributes to the tension demonstrated by Jesus' warning.

Rev. Kate Wesch, a married mother of two, says that she spends considerable time listening to her own worried voice, the one fretting about car payments, insurance, the price of feeding a family of four, medical bills, piano lessons, school trips. You know the litany. You've lived it, too.

But, sometimes, in a moment of quiet, she hears another voice, this one more urgent than the other: she says all the stuff in the world can't drown out the voice of God reminding her to nurture her soul, to seek the purpose for her life and how she can be rich toward God.

Episcopal priest Barbara Brown Taylor says about this parable:

“My guess is that every person here has a different purpose, a different way of being rich toward God. Some people really do need to quit their soul-deadening jobs and find work that is richer in purpose. But a whole lot of other people could wake up to the purpose that is available to them in their lives right now. One of the saddest things in the world is to talk with someone who believes that what he or she does is small change in God’s pocket, not even worth counting. As far as I can tell, there is no such thing.”

Our family has had a few furry friends over the years. One was a collie. A collie with fleas. What a mess. We could not get ahead of the fleas. This was before the flea plus heartworm medication was available. We had to call in an exterminator. One day when the technician was treating our house, I said, “When I get to heaven I’m going to ask God why he created fleas. They can’t possibly serve any purpose.” To which the technician just smiled and said, “Well ma’am, when I get to heaven, I’m going to thank God for my job.”

No vocation is small change in God’s pocket.

Taylor goes on to say, “The world is in need of mending and no stitch is too small. It is possible to pick up straw for God, to diaper a baby, or roof a house or sit in a wheelchair and be a friend for the love of God.

The important thing is to sense how your life and God’s life are flowing in the same direction...” and if they are not, then set your intentions to “help God mend the world and mend you while you are at it.

Until then, if you have to be greedy, be greedy for love. Be greedy for justice, and wisdom, and significance. That way, when it comes time to show God what is in your treasure chest, there won’t be any doubt in either of your minds that, (just like those pies,) you are rich, rich, rich.”*

Barbara Brown Taylor. “Treasure Hunt: Luke 12:13-21.”

*Affirmation of Faith The Apostles' Creed p. 35

*Hymn 581 Gloria Patri

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory

*Hymn 606 Doxology

*Prayer of Dedication

**Lord of abundance, help us who have received so freely from you,
to give as freely in our turn,
and so, have the pleasure of giving
as well as the joy of receiving. Amen.**

*Hymn 838 Standing On the Promises

*Blessing

Go out and imitate God, living in love.

Put your hope in God's Word

and let your own words be truthful and constructive.

Though sin may stir your anger,

never let anger cause you to sin.

And may God always hear your voice.

May Christ Jesus raise you to new life;

and may the Holy Spirit nourish you for the life of love and grace. Amen.

*Postlude