

Luke 12 WHERE YOUR TREASURE LIES, THERE IS YOUR HEART

FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE LIES, Jesus says, THERE WILL YOUR HEART BE ALSO.

So here we are...it's summer and this territory is so very beautiful....and on the other hand the world is a complete mess....We're thankful and overwhelmed by the grace of God that comes to us subtly, in mischievous anonymous ways but when we have eyes to see, ears to hear.... We're overwhelmed by that grace...and yet troubled and aching for the brokenness all around us...

This is us. This is life

In the presence of such as this, we at the very least have a chance to understand that life is full of wonder and awe...that the real things, the most important things, the best things, simply cannot be explained; that coursing through the veins of this world is an unfathomable mystery.

and the name of that mystery is love.

There are moments like that, and others as well, when things are just brought into focus somehow, and when you know....you just KNOW....what your treasure is.

Luke is asking us to consider that question one more time. Where is our treasure? Where do possessions fit in?

Earlier in the chapter we read the parable earlier in the chapter about the rich fool. Remember? Just let me remind you. (Luke 12: 13-21 read it)

From the beginning of his gospel, Luke has talked to us about possessions. Later, in his sequel, (the book of Acts) he will hold up to us as the standard for disciples, the voluntary sharing of our goods. He tells us this was the message of John the Baptizer, and of Jesus of Nazareth, and was the practice of the early Christian communities.

We have known since Mary sang the Magnificat in chapter 1 that Lk would again and again raise for us the seductive and difficult subject of money and things. Faces with the incredible news of the immanent birth of her child, Mary says of God:

"God has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. God has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly. God has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich empty away"

As Mary contemplated the gift of her child, that's what she sang.

As we contemplate the new birthing in our own lives, babies or otherwise, we hear:

"Don't be afraid, little flock, for it is God's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, and unfailing treasure in heaven where no thief comes near and no moth destroys, for where your treasure lies, there will your heart be also."

It's becoming increasingly clear to me that there are things that cannot be discussed in isolation. Three of them are these: the awesome acts of God, the poor, and our own possessions.

(repeat those three)

Over and over and over again in scripture, these are linked. IN this small passage, just three verses, they are all here.

vs 32 DO NOT BE AFRAID, LITTLE FLOCK, FOR IT IS GOD'S GOOD PLEASURE TO GIVE YOU THE KINGDOM.

A very basic message. Don't be afraid. Every angel worth her salt, every angel who ever spoke, said that as an opening line. Don't be afraid. A key note in the gospel story. Don't be afraid. God wants to, and takes pleasure in, your happiness. In my world that might be called unconditional positive regard. God's posture toward us is a posture of One who desires and delights in our happiness.

Don't be afraid. Stop worrying. Worry doesn't help. Let go. Let go of all the questions. "Am I good enough, do I measure up, will I have enough...." Let that go and relax into the love and grace of the God who created you and wants to give you the best that there is. Don't be afraid. Whatever tomorrow brings. God, who loves you beyond your imagining, will be with you. No matter what.

That's wonderful news. Wonderful.

is that all?

Not by a long shot.

BECAUSE you don't have to be afraid....because you are loved absolutely and without condition,

because you can relax into the care of the God who can be trusted with your life, Because of that, you must consider the poor. Be generous toward them. These things cannot be considered apart.

The astonishing good news of the gospel, followed immediately by a command. Listen:

"Don't be afraid, little flock, for it is God's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. sell your possessions, and give alms."

It's like that old song..you can't have one without the other. To accept the gift of God...to accept the love and grace of God without considering the poor is only half the gospel. Only half the truth. And that's what the prophets are so angry about. Amos from last week....(quote 8:4-6; 5:24 Let justice) and - Isaiah of Jerusalem says, speaking for God, "I can't stand your worship services - can't stand them.

You want to show me you love me? LEARN TO DO GOOD. SEEK JUSTICE. RESCUE THE OPPRESSED. DEFEND THE ORPHAN AND PLEAD FOR THE WIDOW".

I would add to that, as many theologians have, care for the earth.

The reverse is also true, though....to be concerned about the poor and the earth and to work for justice without knowing the fullness and beauty of the love and grace of God would, I believe, ultimately lead to burnout, or depression, loss of focus and despair.

Is THAT all?

Not yet!

Our own things: our money, our possessions, what about them?

Are you downsizing these days? Thinking about what will happen when you by choice or necessity move to an apartment or a room at Whistle Bend Place? Are you thinking about stuff?

When I was moving here from NB I purged so much stuff but there were things...I just couldn't. People would say ...leave that old chair here and get one when you get to Whitehorse. But that was MY GRANDMOTHER'S CHAIR. It's a treasure to me. OR....am I just hoarding? I don't need my grandmother's chair to have her with me...why am I hanging on to that stuff?

Or, here's what I'm thinking these days: I'm contemplating retirement...I'm thinking two years but....I haven't decided. When you love your job it's a hard thing to think about. But I get thinking about my savings. I say to myself....you have no kids. When I am old, if I have the privilege of becoming old, the only one looking after me will be me. What's enough? I look at my savings accounts, my investments. Is that enough? What's enough? And that's complicated and involves lots of factors I know that. But that sense of.....do I have enough? What's Enough? And that slips into "AM I ENOUGH?" Companies have convinced us that we are not in fact enough in ourselves. We need stuff. We need trending clothes, we need marble countertops, we need fingernails done regularly.....and now it turns out my teeth aren't white enough and I need to buy some whitening agent.

When do I say no and when do I stop lying awake at night asking myself if I have enough?

It is quite possible to at one level accept the good news of God's love and grace - and to be generous toward the poor - without ever having those things seriously challenge your wallet or your comfort.

Luke is asking us - no, he's telling us, that the 3 have to go together. We have to think hard about what we have. How much we need, how much is enough, and when you are starting to hoard. (have you even watched that show on TV about hoarders? I have a bit of a conspiracy theory about that. I think it can only serve the interests of those who want to sell us more stuff...to show us extreme hoarders so that if we've started to become uncomfortable with the amount of stuff we have, we can watch a show like that and say to ourselves - "I'm not like THAT" and feel ok about buying more. But I digress.

The love of God. The poor. Our own possessions. Any one of those things on its own is not enough. Someone might be very frugal, leading a simple life, not bound to money or things, without ever being aware of God or thinking of the poor. Someone else might be highly tuned to God's love and grace toward them, without caring for the poor or letting God into their bankbooks and storage bins.

And so on.

This is clearly a challenge to hold all three together. That's almost Trinitarian, isn't it?

God, the creator, bringing the world and us into being and loving us fiercely

God the face of Jesus in the poorest of the poor

and God the Holy Spirit, releasing us from bondage to possessions and freeing us to live trusting lives.

What a concept!!

In all of that, the question remains: Where is your treasure?

It's a lucky person who knows.

Where is your treasure? That thing you depend on for security - for sustenance, for safety, - where is it?

Whatever it is that gives your life meaning and purpose, joy...and makes you want to get up in the morning....

when you know the answer, deep inside, you will find your heart and you will find yourself.

There where your treasure lies, there will your heart be also.

you will know yourself truly by what and where your treasure is. Where is yours? What, or who, is it?

Is it your possessions? If so, our friend Luke would want to say two things to you

1) they won't last

and

2) that can change.

If, when you are really honest, you know that it IS money you're clinging to for life and security and you put that first in practical ways

that can change. You CAN let go - and a good start to doing that would be to give some away to the poor. Give them your treasure. Your heart will follow. That's very wise. Very knowing about human nature.

Where your treasure lies, there will your heart be also.

Open yourself to the scriptures - and enter into discussion with others who are also struggling to be faithful in this way. We're all somewhere on the way on this - nobody has arrived. And pray. Pray deeply. If your possessions possess you

let yourself be changed. God can do it.

working in amazing and often mischievous ways. God can do it and God will.

May prayer for you is that you will live a faithful and happy life. That you will know God and yourself as one of God's people, precious and unique

that as you learn of the unspeakable gifts God gives, and experience them for yourself, you will always remember the poor - and that, should YOU ever become poor, other faithful people will remember you.

that you would have laughter and love

and enjoy the things the world can give, but never be enslaved to them

finally, that you will know deeply the love of God and understand in your being that security, the future, and life itself

are truly only found in God.

and THAT is treasure indeed. May it be so for all of us. AMEN