

“WHAT TREASURE ARE WE HIDING”

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Many times the first read of the lessons for the week do not excite or bring a feeling of how much a person would want to preach on them. Well honestly, it felt that way this week again. Of course, I had looked ahead last week and knew what I would be looking forward to this week and next week as well...but there is always a bit of wishful thinking that just maybe there would be a change. It does not usually happen that way. So, as I read the Old Testament lesson, not great news there. The Psalm opens with a great first verse, but as it continues, well you might say there is some judgment there on how we have lived our lives. The second reading, the epistle to the Thessalonians, now there is something we can hold on to and give us hope. Then we arrive at that gospel, and it ends with one being thrown in outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. So, what can a person preach about, where is the good news in these lessons? Where will I hear it and be able to share it with all of you.

I announced last Sunday that I would be out of the office on Monday and Tuesday as I was going to attend my Society of the Holy Trinity Retreat. With the prediction of heavy rain and winds on Monday I decided to take the option to arrive on Sunday night. There were about a half dozen others who also were there, and some of our discussion was around the virus and the closing of businesses and especially the closing churches. How churches became nonessential, and I must admit I never felt that the church was nonessential at any time and if anything, I feel it is even more essential for our wellbeing in times like we are experiencing right now.

That might be what led me to see the gospel in a new light after the retreat and some of what transpired there. As I read the lesson, my first question that came to mind for me was “What treasure are we hiding?” That led to my next question, “What are we afraid of losing?” The person who buried the one talent given to him was afraid that if he did not give back to the master at least what he had been given in the first place, he would have to deal with the wrath of the master. Really the outcome was the same, and like the master said at least he could have invested and gained interest for him instead of burying it and just giving back exactly what he had been given.

Did you notice that the master did not give any instruction to the three as to what they were to do with what had been given them? Can that be our problem as well; we are not quite sure what it is that we are called to do?

On Monday I was asked to read the lesson and a short reading at worship. The first time I read through I did not know if I could read it aloud or not. I read it again and felt the same way. When it came time to read it at worship, I had to pause more than once to get through it and I may have to pause again here today as I read it for you. It is a reading from *Markings* Whitsunday 1961 by Dag Hammarskjöld. *“I don’t know Who – or what put the question, I don’t know when it was put. I don’t even remember answering. But at some moment I did answer Yes to Someone – or Something – and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life, in self-surrender, had a goal. From that moment I have known what it means “not to look back,” and “to take no thought*

*for the morrow.” Led by the Ariadne’s (most holy) thread of my answer through the labyrinth of Life, I came to a time and place where I realized the Way lead to a triumph, which is a catastrophe, and to a catastrophe which is a triumph, that the price for committing one’s life would be reproach and that the only elevation possible to man lies in the depths of humiliation. After that, the word “courage” lost its meaning, since nothing could be taken from me. As I continued along the Way, I learned, step by step, word by word, that behind every saying in the Gospels stands **one** man’s experience. Also behind every prayer that the cup might pass from him and his promise to drink it. Also behind each of the words from the Cross.”*

As I read that and put it in context with the gospel it seemed like even those who had been given the talents were not given any instructions on what they were to do with them, two said “ Yes” putting them to good use while the one did not say “Yes”. Could it have been out of fear of humiliation, that he would not do good enough?

On Tuesday at worship the epistle lesson was from Romans 8 the last two verses 38 and 39 were highlighted in the sermon: ***“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”***

Out of all those items listed that cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord...fear is not listed. Fear is the one thing that can separate us from that love. It was fear that led the man to bury the one talent given to him. It is fear that has paralyzed not only our nation but the world that we are all going to die from Covid-19. Well in case you have never heard this before, WE ARE ALL GOING TO DIE SOMEDAY, WE JUST HAVE NO IDEA WHEN OR HOW, BUT WE ARE ALL GOING TO DIE! As Christians we believe in not only in the life and death of Jesus Christ, but more importantly of his resurrection and that we too will be raised to new life with him. That is the hope that we live in! Fear is what stops us from living out the calling we have answered yes to, in the here and now.

Fear stops us from doing so many things in our lives. I’ll be honest with you all, if we are told we need to close the doors of the church again, I will be here I will not let fear stop me from proclaiming this wonderful message, that when we use the talents, the gifts that are given to us they grow. When we think outside the box and trust me, we have been doing that around here quite a bit lately, we will be shining the light the world needs so much right now. The last three verses from the epistle lesson say it the best: ***“For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.”*** This place, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church and each one of you are essential. Essential because we are called to not look back...and that is part of next week’s lesson, but for today, we are to look forward, to go forward, to be strengthened by and allow no fear to separate you and me from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Shortly you will come forward and you will put out your empty hands and receive the Body of Christ and you will receive a portion of his blood and Jesus literally becomes a part of you in that action. Let the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ fill you with his light and his life. May

it give you strength to drive away the fear that the world wants to fill you and me with to take away the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Remember those first two questions I had? “What treasure are we hiding?” “What are we afraid of losing?” Here is my answer. The treasure is Jesus Christ our Lord and there is no hiding him and we never have to fear that we will lose him because in our baptism we have been named and claimed in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit forever...yesterday, today, tomorrow, and eternally. Amen.