

Pentecost 11 [Pr 13] 7/31/16
 St. Luke 12:13-21 C

APPOINTED GOSPEL READING FOR THIS SUNDAY, FROM THE 12TH CHAPTER OF LUKE'S GOSPEL

“And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority,” the Evangelist Mark tell us (Mk 1:22). And so it is in our lesson this morning that Jesus teaches. And when Jesus teaches, people recognize His ability to teach and the authority He demonstrates. So someone in the crowd, recognizing Jesus' authority, says to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

When you think about it, humanly speaking, the man doesn't really sound that foolish. After all, by this time, Jesus had raised the dead, cast out demons, healed the sick, and He had shown His superior wisdom over the Pharisees and other experts of the Law. This Man Jesus must have had some authority to do such great things.

So, this man in crowd looked to Jesus as someone who could help him get his brother's inheritance by a show of right. Before we get a little high and mighty, let me ask you a question: Is this ever the attitude of your own sinful heart? “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” “I want my stuff!”

God warned us about this in the 9th Commandment:

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, or get it by a show of right, but help and be of service to him in keeping it.

If someone we know has a lot of money or other stuff that we don't have, we should really watch out! Is this because rich people are greedy?

No, it is rather because we are by nature sinful and unclean; which means that we are by nature selfish and self-centered. We want our neighbor's stuff!

Sure ya do! You want more income; a bigger house; a faster boat; your child to start and your neighbor's kid sit on the bench; and that woman, that woman in the magazine or on the internet -- yes, yes, she really could make all your dreams come true; and besides, she won't nag you about taking out the garbage or leaving your wet towel on the floor.

Coveting works another in us, too. If we are blessed with an abundance of wealth, whether it be money, goods, good friends, a good family, a strong body and mind, the ability to hit the golf a long way and straight, we should also be on guard. Why? We not only want stuff; we are greedy, we lookout only for ourselves; we worry only about our skin while thinking very little of our neighbor; and worst of all, we more often than not love the things of this world more than Jesus. But huh, what's wrong with lookin' out for # 1?! And, you know, who's # 1, don't ya?

As Christians, we know Jesus, and we know He teaches with authority. So let's listen to what our Teacher has to say about treasure and wealth.

Jesus tells of a man who has so many crops that he plans to tear down his barns and build bigger ones. To be clear: it is not sinful to build a bigger barn for your crops. But Jesus explains the foolishness of this man. Note his words: "I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years. Eat, drink, be merry." The problem of the man in the parable is that he does not fear, love, and trust in God above all things. He fears, love, and trusts in his earthly stuff to bring him comfort and security for his eternal soul.

God responds: "Fool!" "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'," (Ps 14). The fool says to his soul that the fruits of his own labor will preserve him. The fool says to himself that his efforts will bring him joy. The fool proclaims: "There is no inheritance for me except for that which I enjoy here on earth." The fool looks to his own name, his own reputation, his great number of friends and talents, and he says: "Look at all the good stuff I have! This is my life! I want my stuff!"

But Jesus teaches us that our souls do not belong to us. They are not ours to comfort and encourage by means of earthly goods and treasures. "Fool," God says, "This night your soul is required of you, and the stuff you have accumulated for yourself, whose will they be?"

Jesus ends the parable with these words: "So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich in God." In other words, so is the one who trusts in his earthly possessions but does not have faith Jesus, because that is what truly makes you rich!

So, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, don't look to your bank account for the comfort of your soul. Don't look to your neighbor's stuff, either. If you want your neighbor's stuff, if you want his money, his car, his boat, his house, his family, his friends, repent! Instead, look to Christ! The GOOD NEWS of the Gospel is that the Son of Man wanted what was yours. He wanted your sin, your guilt, your shame, your foolishness. That was his plea to His Father. That was His prayer. "Father," He said, "glorify Me!" And, the Father glorified His Son by giving Him what was yours! God the Father made His only-begotten Son the fool, the coveter, the thief, the adulterer, the gossip. Jesus took on the sin of every sinner.

And as our substitute before God, in our place, the Father gave to Him what our sin deserved. Jesus drank the cup of the Father's wrath

against our foolishness, our failures, our hatred, our sin – He drank it down to the last bitter drop. He willingly bore ridicule, contempt, and disrespect. He asked the Father that the Father's will be done, and His Father answered His prayer with thorns, and nails, and a cross. He answered His prayer by taking the lifeblood of His own Son, the sinless blood of the lamb. Rejoice, and be glad, My Fellow Redeemed in Christ, for that blood cleanses you from all sin and washes white as snow. And the 3rd Day, the Father raised His Son to life again to announce that glorious verdict on all mankind: not guilty!

Yes, Jesus has authority, the authority to give all the riches of the Kingdom of God.

Baptized and living in Christ, the riches of the kingdom of God are ours, the riches the forgiveness of all our sins, peace with God, and joy. When you come to the Lord's Table, He feeds you with His true Body and Blood, forgiving you your sin, and where there is forgiveness, there is life and salvation; strength and cheer today. He is giving us grace to help us in our every need. He is clothing us with His own innocence so that we can stand before God, holy and blameless, the heirs of His Kingdom of heaven.

And as a new creation in Christ, with the heart and mind of Christ, we subdue our earthly goods, they do not subdue us. We see that all that we have is a trust from God. That is because He wants us to enjoy the gift of life that He has given us, and He want to ease the burden of life in a world cursed by sin. So, He opens His hand to give food and drink, air conditioning and heating, indoor plumbing and hot water heaters, eyeglasses and blood pressure medicine, and the money and the freedom and the time and the car and all that we need to go to our granddaughter's dance recital.

And yes, He opens His hand to give us stuff that we may care for our neighbor in their need. Jesus has delivered us from coveting, and we want only what Jesus wants for our neighbor. So, when you come to here to the Lord's Table, you are willingly saying that you will bear your neighbor's burdens and carry their sorrows, just as has Jesus has bore yours and carried you. So, God gives you money, and stuff, and health, and freedom, and opportunity, to be Christ to your neighbor.

So let us look with the eyes of faith to God, who opens His hand and gives all that need for our body and life.

To Him be the Glory. Amen.