

Aug 11 **19th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*Isaiah 1:1, 10-20 I hate your worship Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23 gather the faithful ones

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16 Faith defined *Luke 12:32-40 Treasure in Heaven

Sermon: Heavenly Minded Theme: Investing ourselves in Christ and His mission helps experience a bit of heaven here on earth

It begins with **“Do not be afraid, little flock”** the most common message from a heavenly visitor to those on earth. Jesus certainly was a visitor from heaven, that perspective comes front and center in this passage. For he says. **Little flock, for the Father is pleased to give you the Kingdom**, clearly referring to the Kingdom of heaven, since Jesus was not giving his folks the Kingdom of Rome. He says to **sell your possessions, those things that are so precious to you**, those things that cling to you and those things that hinder you. **Provide purses that will not ever fail**, then you will have an endless supply of God’s blessings and provisions, a treasure that will not fail, and it is safe from thieves and detonation. Then the zinger is **“For wherever you treasure is there will be your heart also”**. The more assets you have in the stock market the more obsessed you will be with it. If you give to a school university or church you will be interested in their outcomes and be concerned for their prosperity. However there is a very legitimate critique of this thinking, often expressed with this sentiment, *“He was so heavenly minded that he was no earthly good”*. If we put our treasure in heaven, we will have no concern for earth. Why should we care if there are mass shootings, if one in five children live in poverty and go hungry during the year. What concern of us is it if in the US, average cost of health care per person is 10,000 dollars and we spend over 17 per cent of our GDP on medical, or what concern is it of ours that 2/3 of bankruptcies are triggered by medical difficulties. This verse misread could lead us to withdraw our selves from the problems of earth. After all it is the souls of people that count. However even here Jesus says, **when you sell your possessions give your money to the poor**, (alms) and in Luke’s sermon on the Mount unlike

Matthew's the **poor are really poor** as the language indicates, not just poor in Spirit.

The second critique of this passage concerns the return of Christ. If Jesus is going to return and make everything right then perhaps there is no need to worry about global warming, or environmental or nuclear holocausts. After all Jesus is coming back, let's just wait and he will fix it. In fact, during our panel discussion on Global warming I was asked about this very theology by the host. I mentioned that I did not know of any Presbyterian who feels, acts or thinks this way, And in fact Luke is not thinking in either of these non productive ways in either his Gospel Acts. The gospel speaking of Jesus in chapter 8 says, **He traveled about preaching the Good News of the Kingdom and he took his disciples and those who had been healed with him.** In chapter 10, He tells his followers to be proactive in the same way when he sends them out on a missionary journey he tells them **to enter a house and heal everyone there, and then tell them that the Kingdom of God is very near.** In chapter 11 Jesus is described again as **“speaking about the Kingdom of God and healing all those who need it”** Luke is precise in his composition and structure and it is no accident that those verses give background for these sayings in chapter 12. In Acts Luke is fact addressing those who think that we should just sit back and let God take care of it. For in the Ascension scene which begins Acts Jesus is asked **when he will return will he restore the Kingdom of Israel,** he answered **it is not for you to know but you shall be my witnesses Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth.** In Acts the church opens the door to the unclean, like the gentiles, and the alienated like the Ethiopian Eunuch, they heal the sick and they challenge economic structures that are hurting people, and it is recorded that they are in constant conflict with the powers of oppression here on earth.

For Luke, the the challenges of this world, and needs of the people here and now are primary. **People who are heavenly minded do the most earthly good.** It is those who feed the hungry, empower the poor with good news of the gospel, and are concerned to care for the sick and needy. It is only on earth that there are borders and barriers between people. There will be no borders in heaven, but people on both sides of our borders **will be dine at the heavenly banquet with Christ serving them,** as this passage so wonderfully portrays, and as our Missionary Mark Adams mentioned. The dream of heaven in our hearts causes our hands to work to bring the Kingdom near.

I had the chance to visit Venus Nienow this week, She brought up heaven and mentioned this week's Lectionary passage.

She said, "I have a card I want to give you. It shows the wise men and says that came with earthly treasure but they left with heavenly". Well Venus went through three drawers of earthly treasures for over an hour looking for that card. As we traveled this archeological expedition in layers I saw how the seeds of heaven had been sowed in her life. She showed me cards from her Deacons, Nancy Cobery and Gwen May, and there was a Christmas card signed by Justin Bell, George and Elizabeth Bunch and Ellen Baurlee, among others. And she showed me a picture that she really cherished showing a large group of young people that she has had helped with reading difficulties on the picture many of them had signed by their image. She was a bit of a pack rat with cards, but the real treasures were the people who had affected her, and the people she had affected. You see in heaven she may not ever see those cards but she will see those people, for that is where real treasure is stored. Every ethical issue on earth comes down to the real people who are impacted and I saw real people on those cards of Venus.

So at Trinity I am so glad that we invest so much in others. Amen.

