



Where do you place your faith? Does the idea of trusting God for protection, provision and justice sound naive and unrealistic to you? Yet, this is exactly what the Scriptures call us to do – to live differently from the self-protective, wealth accumulating, customs of our world, and place our trust in God. In the face of the huge challenges we face in the world this may sound completely out of touch, but, when the role of money in so many of those challenges is recognised, the call to give up our faith in finance and reclaim a true, child-like faith in God becomes disturbingly relevant and subversive.

May your worship this week move you into a place of deeper trust in God, and more courageous challenge of the culture of accumulation in our world.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Hosea 11:1-11: Judgement is prophesied for Israel because of the people's idolatry and unfaithfulness, but God's compassion and love for God's people makes judgement difficult for God, and so restoration is also promised.

OR **Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-23**: The teacher laments that everything is meaningless, and reflects on the futility of working

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hard to accumulate wealth that will ultimately be inherited by others, who may or may not use it wisely.

Psalm 107:1-9, 43: Praise for God's unfailing love, and God's salvation of God's people when in distress. The history of God's people reveals God's faithful love.

OR **Psalm 49:1-12**: Not even the wealthy can save themselves from death or buy their way into eternal life. Therefore, there is no reason to fear those who trust in their wealth.

Colossians 3:1-11: Because of Christ's life in us, we are called to prioritise the values of heaven over the values of earth, and to avoid the greed and lust that of "earth-bound" existence. Rather, recognising that we are all the same in Christ, we are to find our life in Christ, and seek to become like our God.

Luke 12:13-21: In warning against greed, Jesus tells a parable of a wealthy man who feels secure because of his great riches, but whose wealth becomes meaningless when he dies. Then Christ challenges us to seek a rich relationship with God instead of material riches.

Readings at:

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Hosea%2011:%201-11%0Acw%20Psalm%20107:%201-9,%2043%0AColossians%203:%201-11%0ALuke%2012:%2013-21

LECTIONARY NOTES

RCL: Hosea 11:1-11; Psalm 107:1-9, 43; Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 12:13-21

Hosea 11:1-11

It is striking to see the emotional vulnerability and passion of God in this passage. Forget any notion of God as a distant, unaffected observer. God desires us with a powerful passion. Israel is the wayward son who continually breaks relationship with God, and God's heartache is almost palpable in today's passage from Hosea.

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It's as if God is saying, "Israel, you are my son that I lead out of the wilderness, and you keep wandering off to worship other gods. You are breaking my heart. But I will not give up. How can I forget my beloved child?"

God's words are just as true for us as they are for Israel. Are we not the children of God, who were brought of the wilderness through the waters of baptism? But sometimes we falter. We lose sight of whose we are and where we are headed as God's beloved children. Our wandering is the same as Israel's: being oblivious to the love of the God who pursues us with such abandon. But our hope is also the same as Israel's: trusting in the God who graciously pursues us rather than ourselves or anything else in whom we might be tempted to put our trust.

- How have you felt God pursuing relationship with you this week?
- How can you practice placing your trust in God?

Psalm 107:1-9, 43

I recently worked at a summer day camp where I helped small children get acquainted with the swimming pool. They ranged from five to eight years old, and many of these children had never been swimming before. Each child sat on the edge of the pool and waited for their turn to be carried through the water of the pool. What amazed me was the rapid progress some of these children were able to make in their comfort level in the water. Some of the children trusted me enough that they would allow themselves to be turned onto their backs to float. They believed I was trustworthy which enabled them to trust that they would be carried through the water.

- The waters of our lives can be deep and downright frightening. But if we trust that God is good, we can allow ourselves to be carried, even in the roughest of waters.
- Do you believe that God is fundamentally good as the psalmist says?

Colossians 3:1-11

This section of Colossians is concerned with a radical reorientation of personal identity. Imagine you meet someone for the first time. You begin to introduce yourself, but instead of starting off with where you were born or what you do for a living, you tell them that you are a part of Christ. Your identity as a part of Christ is so fundamental that it becomes the primary factor in how you think of yourself. That's what the author of Colossians is describing when they write "you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

It is this identification with Christ that frames our lives. It is the basis for our ethical lives: we are in Christ and, as a part of him who is true and good, the only thing that makes sense is to shed all of the parts of our lives that do not reflect who he is.

- What does it mean to shed the parts of your lives that do not reflect Christ in us?

Luke 12:13-21

"Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Jesus's warning could not be more timely.

I recently heard a bishop say that the largest religion in America is consumerism. He asked us to pause and reflect on the fact that all of our national holidays: Christmas, Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, etc. are dedicated to shopping. Our national holidays are occasions to buy more things that we most likely do not need. And then we work more to get more money to buy more things we don't really need. The cycle continues until we find ourselves robbed from actually living our lives, reduced to anticipating the next purchase.

But this isn't life. Jesus's warning is good news that invites us to actually live the life that God intends: a life of self-giving love in relationship with God, our neighbors, and creation.

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- In what ways do you give into the need for an “abundance of possessions?”
- What is one way you can become “rich toward God?”

SERMON

Right now in the world there is lots of tension on the issues of income and wealth inequality. I am not an economist or social scientist so I will not get into these complicated aspects. However, This Sunday’s scriptures do offer us some reflection from a Christian perspective.

Jesus has taught us the two great commandments; the first is to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength. The second is to love our neighbor as ourselves.

“Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” Jesus tells the two brothers who are in dispute of the family inheritance. Jesus reminds them that life is not about owning, or possessing things abundantly. We are to love God wholeheartedly and not to worship possessions as idols.

To emphasize his point, Jesus tells these two brothers the parable of a rich man whom he also calls as a fool, the “rich fool”. This rich man had the blessings of abundant harvests. The produce is so abundant that he does not have enough space to store them. With this abundance, what does this rich man do? The scripture tells his only concerns are “I” and “my.” In his whole thought process, it is only he himself that is in the center. It shows he only loves himself.

We have a few issues here: greed, rich, and fool.

In the Epistles to the Colossians, the author admonishes that “Put to death, whatever in you is earthly: ... greed (which is idolatry). (Colossians 3: 5)

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Greed is defined as “a selfish and excessive desire for more of something (as money) than is needed” by Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

Is desiring for more of something than is needed really bad? Don't we all want to have abundance? Don't we all want to have a little leftover money to cushion ourselves in times of need? Isn't that why we contribute to pension fund, to have 401K, 401C, for our retirement?

I don't think it is when one prepares for rainy days, or stores up one's abundance that causes Jesus to call us fools, or does he condemn wealth.

It is the selfish and excessive desire for oneself that becomes greed. It is the way we treat our abundance and our wealth that matters to God.

Jesus further says, “So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.” These people end up with spiritual death.

Who are those who are not rich toward God?

Often times, when we mention rich, we think of money, wealth. In the Bible, there are at least fifty times that money, wealth, possession or finances have been mentioned. They are mostly based on the basic commandments that “Love God and love your neighbor as yourself.”

When we love God, we are rich toward God. When we love our neighbor, we are rich toward God. It is because we show gratitude to God of the blessings bestowed to us.

This rich man forgets about God, the one who gives him all the blessings he has. God gives him the talents to grow the crop and receives the produce abundantly. Whatever God gives will eventually be returned to God. Isn't that what the Teacher tells us in Ecclesiastes?

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“I hated all my toil in which I had toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to those who come after me.” (Ecclesiastes 2:18) He can't take all the possessions with him, neither can we.

Isn't this rich man a fool by hoarding all the produce and thinks he can enjoy it into eternity? He does not know his last day on earth is coming soon. And neither do we.

This man's rich in produce can be rich toward God by showing God his gratitude. He can show God his gratitude by sharing his abundance with his neighbors who may not have such blessings but are struggling in their lives. He forgets he should love God with his whole heart, whole mind, whole spirit, and whole strength. He forgets he should love his neighbors as himself.

Isn't this one of the issues of the inequality of income and wealth of the contemporary world? The rich hoard the abundance without showing their gratitude to the creators. Not only do they not love their neighbors by not helping them out but they oppress them so as to hoard more wealth.

Who doesn't want to be rich? Who doesn't want to be the 1%? Isn't that why we want to go to Ivy League universities, to study hard and to work hard and be successful? However, when we get rich, will we be the rich fool? Or will we rich toward God?

The following list has been around in the cyberspace and is something that captures what Jesus said in the Gospel. I would like to share part of it in conclusion.

Things God won't ask on that day:

1. God won't ask what kind of car you drove. God will ask how many people you gave a lift to who didn't have any transportation.
2. God won't ask the square footage of your house. But God will ask how many people you welcomed into your home.
3. God won't ask about the clothes you had. God will ask how many you helped to clothe.

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4. God won't ask what your highest salary was. But God will ask if you compromised your integrity to obtain it.
5. God won't ask what your job title was. God will ask whether you performed your job to the best of your ability.
6. God won't ask how many friends you had. God will ask how many people to whom you made sure you were a friend.
7. God won't ask in what neighborhood you lived. But God will ask how you treated and behaved with your neighbours.

Amen.

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Lord of all power and might,
who art the author and giver of all good things;
Graft in our hearts the love of thy Name,
increase in us true religion,
nourish us with all goodness,
and of thy great mercy keep us in the same;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Lord of all power and might,
the author and giver of all good things:
Graft in our hearts the love of your name,
increase in us true religion,
nourish us with all goodness,
and of your great mercy keep us in the same;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Presider or deacon

Let us offer prayers to God, who knows the needs of every living creature.

Deacon or other leader
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For N our bishop and N
our presbyter, for this holy gathering, and for the people of God in
every place.

Lord, have mercy.

For the leaders of the nations, and for mercy, justice, and peace in
the world.

Lord, have mercy.

For farmers and a good harvest, for travelers and those on
vacation, and for safety from
violent storms.

Lord, have mercy.

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering,
prisoners, captives, and their
families, the hungry, homeless, and oppressed.

Lord, have mercy.

For the dying and the dead.

Lord, have mercy.

For ourselves, our families and companions, and all those we love.

Lord, have mercy.

Lifting our voices with all creation, with Saint _____ and all
the saints, let us
offer ourselves and one another
to the living God through Christ.
To you, O Lord.

Presider

All-knowing God, God of Wisdom, hear our prayers for all whose
days are full of pain
and give us rest from toil; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

POST COMMUNION

Lord God,
whose Son is the true vine and the source of life,
ever giving himself that the world may live:
May we so receive within ourselves
the power of his death and passion
that, in his saving cup,
we may share his glory and be made perfect in his love;
for he is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever.

O God,
as we are strengthened by these holy mysteries,
so may our lives be a continual offering,
holy and acceptable in your sight;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Strengthen for service, Lord, the hands that have taken holy things;
may the ears which have heard your word be deaf to clamour and
dispute; may the tongues which have sung your praise be free from
deceit; may the eyes which have seen the tokens of your love shine
with the light of hope; and may the bodies which have been fed with
your body be refreshed with the fullness of your life; glory to you for
ever. Amen.

Holy Father, who gathered us here around the table of your Son to
share this meal with the whole household of God: in that new world
where you reveal the fullness of your peace, gather people of every
race and language to share in the eternal banquet of Jesus Christ
our Lord. Amen.

We praise and thank you, O Christ, for this sacred feast: for here we
receive you, here the memory of your passion is renewed, here our
minds are filled with grace, and here a pledge of future glory is
given, when we shall feast at that table where you reign with all
your saints for ever. Amen.

PRAYERS

God of justice,
your word is light and truth.
Let your face shine on us to restore us,
that we may walk in your way,
seeking justice and doing good. Amen.

Friends in Christ,
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers
as dear to us as our own needs.
Loving our neighbours as ourselves,
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions
on behalf of the church and the world.
Hear our prayers, God of power,
and through the ministry of your Son
free us from the grip of the tomb,
that we may desire you as the fullness of life
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.

As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,
and guided them in the way of your love,
so listen now to those who call upon you.
Move us to praise your gracious will,
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death
and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God, friend of those in need,
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens
and healed our spirits.
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,
those seeking healing,
those in need within the church and the world.
Hear our prayers
that we may love you with our whole being
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbours. Amen.

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Creator God,
you call us to love and serve you
with body, mind, and spirit
through loving your creation
and our sisters and brothers.
Open our hearts in compassion
and receive these petitions
on behalf of the needs of the church and the world.
Holy One,
hear our prayers and make us faithful stewards
of the fragile bounty of this earth
so that we may be entrusted with the riches of heaven. Amen.

We praise your abiding guidance, O God,
for you sent us Jesus, our Teacher and Messiah,
to model for us the way of love for the whole universe.
We offer these prayers of love
on behalf of ourselves and our neighbours,
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.
Loving God,
open our ears to hear your word
and draw us closer to you,
that the whole world may be one with you
as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of mercy and healing,
you who hear the cries of those in need,
receive these petitions of your people
that all who are troubled
may know peace, comfort, and courage.
Life-giving God,
heal our lives,
that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds
and offer you thanks from generation to generation
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of salvation,
who sent your Son to seek out and save what is lost,

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hear our prayers
on behalf of those who are lost in our day,
receiving these petitions and thanksgivings
with your unending compassion.
Redeeming Sustainer,
visit your people
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,
that we may hurry to make you welcome
not only in our concern for others,
but by serving them
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

Generous God,
in abundance you give us things both spiritual and physical.
Help us to hold lightly the fading things of this earth
and grasp tightly the lasting things of your kingdom,
so that what we are and do and say
may be our gifts to you
through Christ, who beckons all to seek the things above,
where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Generous Giver,
you pour forth your extravagant bounty without measure
upon your whole creation.
Teach us such generosity,
that the fruits of our spirits
and the works of our hands may be used
for the building of your commonwealth of blessing. Amen.

Almighty God, who sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of
your Church: open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that we
may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and peace;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns
with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen. *Common Worship*

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Gracious father, revive your Church in our day, and make her holy, strong and faithful, for your glory's sake in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Common Worship Shorter Collect.*

Almighty God, your Son has opened for us a new and living way into your presence. Give us new hearts and constant wills to worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Methodist Worship*

Lord and giver of life, you alone nourish and sustain your people, through Christ, the bread of life. Feed our hunger and quench our thirst, that we may no longer work for that which fails to satisfy, but do what you require, in obedience and faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Methodist Worship*

O God, the King of Righteousness, lead us we pray, in the way of justice and of peace. Inspire us to break down all oppression and wrong, to gain for everyone their reward, and from every one their due service; that each may live for all, and all may care for each, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, you know our needs before we ask, and our ignorance in our asking; have compassion on our weakness, and give us those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Lord, Jesus Christ, let me seek you by desiring you, and let me desire you by seeking you. Let me find you by loving you, and love you in finding you. Amen. *St Anselm*

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the eternal covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

(c) 1st Reading Hosea 11: 1–11

518* Bind us together, Lord

3 God is love: let heaven adore him

569* Hark, my soul, it is the Lord

211* Immortal love for ever full

7* My God, how wonderful thou art

231* My song is love unknown

(c) Psalm Psalm 107: 1–9, 43

683* All people that on earth do dwell

353* Give to our God immortal praise

30* Let us, with a gladsome mind

484* Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim

361* Now thank we all our God

45* Praise, O praise our God and King

372* Through all the changing scenes of life

374* When all thy mercies, O my God

(p) 1st Reading Ecclesiastes 1: 2, 12–14; 2: 18–23

563* Commit your ways to God

(p) Psalm Psalm 49: 1–12

10* All my hope on God is founded

319* Father, of heaven, whose love profound

533* God of grace and God of glory

2nd Reading Colossians 3: 1–11

260* Christ is alive! Let Christians sing

501 Christ is the world's true light

566* Fight the good fight with all thy might

496* For the healing of the nations

268* Hail thou once–despisèd Jesus

522* In Christ there is no east or west

272* [Jesus lives! thy terrors now]

427* Let all mortal flesh keep silence

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392 Now is eternal life

287* [The whole bright world rejoices now]

AN INVITATION

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