

Sunday, July 31, 2016

Luke 12: 13-31

First Christian Church

1

Psalm 107:1-9, 43

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, those he redeemed from trouble
and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and
from the south.

Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town;
hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their
distress;

he led them by a straight way, until they reached an inhabited town.

Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to
humankind.

For he satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things.

Let those who are wise give heed to these things, and consider the steadfast love of
the Lord.

Luke 12:13-34

Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

Do Not Worry

Sunday, July 31, 2016

Luke 12: 13-31

First Christian Church

2

He said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

I had the good fortune to sing in the Bethel College Choir for five years - four as a student and one more after graduating. I stayed for the fifth year so that I could go to Europe with the Choir. You see, we never got to go on a European Tour while I was an actual student. It may sound like bragging, and perhaps it is, but Minnesota has reputation for having the finest collegiate choirs in the country: St. Olaf, Concordia, Augsburg, Bethel, and I could go on. Robert Berglund was the conductor of the Bethel Choir, and everything I know about making music, I owe to him. Every concert, every performance by the Bethel Choir under Dr Berglund, ended with his arrangement of Edward Bickersteth, Jr. hymn, "Peace, Perfect Peace. After five years, it was impossible to sing it and keep a dry eye. Needless to say, forty years later and I still know the words and can hear the entire piece in my mind's ear.

Sunday, July 31, 2016

Luke 12: 13-31

First Christian Church

3

"Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The love of Jesus whispers peace within."

As I have said before, if you want someone to remember something, sing it to them. But if you want them to know it in a deep and personal way, teach them to sing it. They may not experience the truth of the music at the time, but burying it deeply in a persons memory, almost one-hundred percent guarantees they will eventually.

"Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed?
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest."

Jesus was busy. The crowd was growing by the minute. Pushing and shoving had broken out. People were just shouting out comments, like modern day hecklers.

“He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.”

"Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!"

“Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us."

The scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile toward him and to cross-examine him about many things, lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say. So when someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” Jesus went off on him, "Who made me your judge and executioner!" It's seems a bit harsh, but it may well be that he was getting a little frustrated. So he launches into one of his harshest or at least hardest parables.

We all know this story, don't we. We know it because it strikes a bit too close to home. Who among us has not torn down some figurative barn to build something

Sunday, July 31, 2016

Luke 12: 13-31

First Christian Church

4

bigger? Who among us hasn't looked at our lives, our accomplishments and successes, and felt some pride and satisfaction? Who among us hasn't looked at our families - our sons and daughters or our grandchildren and not felt a welling up of pride and contentment?

The truth is, none of that is wrong. None of that is a problem for Jesus. The problem is really a matter of the heart. The questioner's heart was in the wrong place. He wasn't interested in justice, except as it was justice for him. He wasn't interested in generosity, except as the settlement was generous for him. And Jesus says, "You fool!" His heart was in the wrong place and therefore his life was empty. And his life would still be empty when he did receive his inheritance. Like the man within the parable, he likely was already wealthy, and could have chosen to use his new wealth for the benefit of others, but instead his desire was to hoard it only for himself.

"Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?
On Jesus' bosom naught but calm is found."

But of course, Jesus wasn't done yet. You see, too often we think this story is about money - that's its wrong to have money. What Jesus is really saying is that it is foolish to worry about money - that to live well and live wise, one should be generous toward God. If you have been blessed to be successful and to have accumulated enough to live well, then be generous towards God. Care for the things God cares about. Care for the people God cares about. Care for your church. Care for the earth. Care for those who are not as fortunate in their lives, who need help to get by, who don't have bread for today. Be generous toward God. Use your gifts and talents to further the church's work. Serve on a committee. Give leadership to a class. Volunteer to help out with meal preparation. See to it that your young people and children are here on Wednesday nights for their activities. Offer your creativity as the church seeks to develop new ways of sharing First Christian's story with the community.

Sunday, July 31, 2016

Luke 12: 13-31

First Christian Church

5

Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown?

Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.

There is so much in our world that is out of control. There is so very much that we can't understand, can't wrap our arms around. It seems like every time our phone chirps, there is a notice about another shooting spree - more reprehensible loss of life. Where did all the anger come from? What is the source of this undercurrent of hatred? There seems to be so much to fear, that it would be easy to curl up in our own cocoon and let the world pass by without even trying to make a difference.

And, for a wide swath of Christianity, that is exactly what they do, believing what Jesus says here, seems to free them from being engaged in life today. They are simply holding out until the day when God will come swooping in and make everything all right. Since the birds don't worry about their plumage, why should we worry either? But I don't believe for one second that Jesus was interested in a faith that is founded on "pie in the sky in the sweet bye and bye" living. Jesus' desire was to foster engagement. He doesn't advocate for peace by standing on the sidelines, he offers peace in the getting into the game.

As I have said, this is a generous church. You do understand that to be truly happy, to have joy and meaning in life, one must share one's blessings. And I am so very proud of the way that you do that. But being generous toward God is not just about sharing finances. Its is not even primarily about sharing finances. Its about sharing your story of faith. About sharing the role that First Christian Church makes in your life. About why you get up on Sunday and instead of spending the morning at the coffee shop or on the deck reading the paper, you come downtown for fellowship and worship. You come down here, to First Christian Church, because perhaps it is only here that you find peace. The peace of people you love. The peace of prayer. The peace of hearing God's story of love in word and song. The peace of gathering at Christ's table, where for a few minutes you can shut the door on the world's trouble, and prepare yourself for reengaging

Sunday, July 31, 2016

Luke 12: 13-31

First Christian Church

6

in the hard work of bringing peace where you work and play - where you live. This is where you have learned to be generous. This is where you have found peace. No, not perfect peace, for we too look for the day of perfect peace, but we don't wait for it here. We work for it.

It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease,
And Jesus calls us to Heav'n's perfect peace.