

TRINITY 9

August 9 2020

Old Test: 2 Samuel 22:26-34

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 10:6-13

Gospel: Luke 16:1-9

Standing...

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

I've told you before that during the second half of the Church Year, we focus on the teachings of Christ—as opposed to following the events of His life.

Well, this morning our Lord gives us good instruction,
inviting us to live in love towards each other.

Let us pray. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in Your sight O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sitting...

What makes it into the kingdom of God?

Other than you—who or what gets in?

Does Congress? No.

The Presidency? No.

Taxes? Nope.

Covid? Absolutely not.

Not even wealth itself gets into the kingdom of God—think of that...

no wallets, no checkbooks, no debit or credit cards,

no 401ks, stocks or bonds. None of it.

The only thing that makes it into the Kingdom of God is people—
the people who surround us all the time.

People who stand in various kinds of need.

People whom we can bless in countless ways.

Everything you own, at some point, is headed for a yard sale or a thrift store,
and eventually, it's thrown on the burn pile or thrown out altogether.

The dishonest manager in our parable is commended,
not for his dishonesty, but for his shrewdness.

He had his single-minded dedication to improve his situation.
He heard what the future had in store for him,
and he made plans for people to welcome him
when he got axed from his management job.

The funds he was used to receiving,
would not be following him into the future;
he was going to lose them all.
But the people to whom he showed kindness and goodwill to,
the people who benefited from his generosity would support him.
So, he made friends by means of wealth,
for he knew friends would remain even when the wealth was gone.

Jesus tells us that pagans get this lesson, sometimes better than we do.
In other words, pagans figure out that they can't take their stuff
with them when they die.
So, your stuff, your wealth, your money, your expertise,
your wisdom, your connections...
all are instruments the Lord gives, to you,
to be used to make eternal friends—
friends who will enter the kingdom of God.

For on the Last Day, you will be surrounded by all the dead the Lord will raise,
and many of them will be people you knew,
people whose paths you crossed somewhere in this journey of life.

So, invest in your future, for you already know what's coming.
Specifically invest in those brothers and sisters in Christ—
those who will be with you on the great Last Day.
Share with them now.
Give to them now.
Love them now.
For they will be with you in glory—
with you in the Kingdom of God!

Now listen, so many of you do this already.
You support Word and Sacrament ministry in this place,
and you support the same in other countries, by means of our missionaries.

God be praised for this.

But when the Holy Spirit puts this text before us this morning,
He wants us all to take stock and ask,
"Am I using what God has given me to make eternal friends?"

I think of this altar.

I have no idea who built it.

But, I'm blessed by it.

And that font...

Those baptized in it are blessed indeed.

Someone, or someone ones, used what they had—

their skills,

their expertise,

their knowledge to build something

to bless others.

How shrewd of them!

And one day we'll meet them.

Every time someone brings vegetables from their garden to share with the staff,
I think, there you go—making friends.

Again, are you using what God has given to make eternal friends?

Where we've failed to do this, we repent. We have a change of mind.

For we want to grow and increase

in the kind of shrewdness

that the Lord commends in the parable.

For you see, this is exactly what Jesus did.

Jesus noticed His neighbor, namely us, noticing us in our need,
and He didn't count a single thing that was His as His own.

St. Paul explains, "*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that even though He was rich, yet for your sake, He became poor. So that you be His poverty, might become rich*" (2 Cor. 8:9).

Jesus gives up everything He has to befriend you,

to care for you, to forgive you,

and to provide you with a heavenly home.

He humbles Himself so as to gain you.

His cross is where He has made Himself friends—eternal friends,

and He will one day welcome you home.
Jesus invites us into this same way of thinking and living.
No doubt—He does it perfectly.
Yet He shows that
a life lived in service to your neighbor
is the only sort of life worth living.

So, fellow redeemed, use the stuff that doesn't last, to bless the people that do.

In the holy name of Jesus, Amen.

Standing...

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.