

**Pent 11 Proper 14; Hebrews 11 and Luke 12; August 8, 2010 R. Prior****Prayer**

Our life in faith is often about struggling to let go. We know that feeling in the transitions that are part of our lives for sure. But we also know it chronically and consistently if we take seriously our journey in faith and our relationship to the Kingdom of God which we seek as Christians. Struggling to let go...it's hard.

Last week the gospel was about greed and our possessions and our struggle to let go of our need to hoard and secure ourselves in life. This week's gospel which follows that passage continues and deepens this theme with the familiar phrase "for where your treasure is there will your heart be also."

It not just about our possessions and we relate to them, it is also about what we trust as the promise for our lives, is it fame, power, money, or something less tangible and more eternal, internal, spiritual.

This gospel begins with a promise, "Do not be afraid little flock, for it is your Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom... Make purses for yourself which do not wear out an unfailing treasure in heaven." It is indeed a struggle for me to let go and trust that more than I trust all the empirical, tangible, practical things in my life that give me a sense of place and security. The gospel says that treasure of the kingdom is what we should be prepared for, and in which we find hope for life. Hard to do! (This gospel and Jesus made the assumption that the world was close to the consummation, the eschaton, that it would all end soon anyway and it

was time to set things right. For us that is less so but at root the basic issue remains where do you find hope for life that is reliable and eternal and not transient as virtually everything we know and relate to is...

The Epistle from Hebrews 11 echoes this same theme in saying "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." That may seem pretty flimsy for many in our age but it is the declaration of hope in that which is beyond us in every way, even beyond the limits of our existence. In this chapter of Hebrews several examples are given of figures from Israel's past which are then connected to its present and its future. It details their journeys and their struggles just as this passage does that of Abraham who proceeds in faith through a significant journey away from all he knew and great changes in his life as the promise is realized and his destiny and progeny become vastly greater than he ever imagined.

Faith is a commitment to a reality we cannot prove but which we know by experience that the universe is in fact the creation of God and the expression of God's purpose. It is not assurance in the sense of a certainty that means we have it all figured out and can be smug in our self satisfaction with what we believe. It is rather an openness and a searching for the promise of life that is a gift of God. It is a respect for all forms of faith that God inspires in people and a willingness to revere and understand the way that God has spoken at various times and places.

Faith is life lived content that God manages truth and not us and we are seekers and sojourners in a long line of believers who look to the hope of God for hope and meaning rather by spending out time trying to combat the various forms of our anxiety by trying to continually wrest control of our lives. It is to live trusting that something new and hopeful is about to break in and that is trustworthy for us.

See I think one of the hardest things we have to do in life is to believe and trust that phrase in the collect for today that says: we' who cannot exist without you, may by you be enabled to live according to your will." That is the crux of a real struggle to let go and that is precisely the task of a faithful life.

It is about getting our possessions, our ambitions and lust for power, and our values in order and living free of the claims they make upon us and finding ways to live truly and fully in hope. Not a life or storing nuts against future calamity but the freedom of a life spent finding hope and promise for living.

A life of faithful stewardship is about nothing less than this, to be so free of all the things in life that can bind and possess us that we find the freedom to journey in God's grace to the destiny that is before us but not readily seen. That is not an economic or even a lifestyle decision, it is thoroughly spiritual and it has to do with where our treasure in life is and where our hearts are set and fixed.

So how do we hear the lines of the gospel: "do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom." That is where we are headed toward the kingdom.

Getting there involves getting our values straightened out. It means not holding so tightly to the notion that all the security we find in life will be that which we establish for ourselves in our earnings, our 401Ks and 403 B's and in a stock market reacting wildly to the dynamics of international finance and lending. Our security is not in trusting too much the things that we control and often think insulate us from hardships of life. So Jesus says: Find an unfailing treasure in heaven where thieves do not come near or moth destroys. Where our treasure lays our heart and in some sense our destinies lie also.

In the course of virtually every week I get to see the things that happen on the journeys of a variety of people. Some things are very good and joyful. People decide to commit to each other in marriage; a child is born and blesses a family with the gift of new life.

Sometimes the journey is not so hopeful. People struggle with illness, friends of long standing die and families grieve. Couples have to struggle with children who are seriously debilitated or with the challenges of inadequate income, or a past which haunts their lives forever. Marriage

relationships run into rough waters and are threatened. The journey can be hard and truly uncertain. But the promise is not absent or invalidated.

*We are part of an age that is always reaching out, always seeking for the destination that brings an answer to the misery and misfortune. We do that in science and medicine, in space travel, and in regard to the delicate ecological balance of our world. We also do it in trying to understand the infinite complexity of the relationship between nations and races in the political and social turmoil of our times. Sometimes that can be very promising. But, it never really brings us to our journeys end and usually only to a new set of challenges or problems.*

At the end of the journey we follow is always God's own self hanging on a cross and reaching out to humanity (to us) and leading us into the assurance of a better country where the promise can be realized for us in our lives. The question is: Are we willing like Abraham and Moses to trust our lives to that promise? Can we dare to live life in assurance that God is with us and will bring us to our journeys end, to our true home? Hard to bet our lives on that, or is it?