

St. James, Emily  
9th Sunday after Pentecost  
10 August, 2025  
Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16; Luke 12:32-40

Last Sunday, this Sunday and next Sunday the gospel readings are from Luke chapter 12. This chapter is about discipleship. It's about our relationship with God, with Jesus the Christ. The key sentence comes from this week's reading

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Luke, in the 12th chapter of his gospel paints pictures of discipleship, what it means to be a disciple, a follower of Jesus.

Last week, starting at verse 16 we read the story of the farmer who has a bumper crop and decides to build more barns to store the crop so he can stop working and take it easy. Canon Milton told us about this farmer and his plan to Sit back, put my feet up, and enjoy what I have. He had no thought of where the bountiful harvest came from. He believed, that he didn't need God even if there was a god. He was in control of his life.

The writer of Hebrews sets us straight: By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible. The bumper crops that the farmer harvested came from the God that the farmer ignored.

Next week, in another parable beginning in verse 45, Jesus tells the story of a slave who was put in charge of the other slaves as a test of his loyalty. But when the master leaves, the slave beats them and begins to eat and get drunk, not caring about what the master wants – a smooth running operation. When the master returns unexpectedly, he is found out and punished.

In the middle of chapter 12, at verse 22, Jesus teaches his disciples saying: Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about you 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.

Jesus is telling them, and us, that we can depend on God to provide and that we need to acknowledge that these things come from God. It is God that provides.

In the reading from this morning's gospel we hear Jesus telling us to not be afraid. I will look after you. I know what your needs are. He says: Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Jesus, our shepherd is caring for his flock, us. This is reassuring. But...

Next Jesus says something that is very disturbing. We catch our breath as we hear the words: Sell you possessions, and give alms. Are we to give away all our possessions?

Sheila is thinking ahead, realizing that someday in the future, we don't know when, we will have to move to an apartment or retirement home. Already, Sheila is downsizing. She tells me that we don't want to

have to get rid of a lot of “stuff” at the last minute. I agree with her. My problem is, I have a large collection of books that I don’t really want to get rid of them. I’m allowing this obsession to control my actions. I’m a bit like the farmer building larger barns. Why can’t I trust God to give me what I need in the way of books? and other things. Where is my treasure? Where is my trust in God?

Sheila is not giving away all her possessions. She is keeping some of them, those that are important to her, realizing that even those are God given. It’s not about having nothing, rather it is about acknowledging and owning the truth that all things come from thee O Lord. And a willingness to give up things when we believe God is telling us to. We can’t be obsessing over stuff.

Our gospel reading continues with the call to action: Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit. This is also told in Matthew’s gospel about the five wise virgins and the five foolish ones who failed to have enough oil to keep their lamps lit for when the Bridegroom arrived.

Be Prepared as the Boy Scout motto states. We don’t know when our time will come. As disciples of Jesus, we need to be prepared.

As hard as it is to let go of our earthly treasures, it is also difficult to trust that God will provide, but we need to look at our priorities. What is really important when it comes to eternal life? God or stuff.

We are disciples of Jesus, followers of Jesus. If followers, what does that mean?

Just as I shouldn’t wait until we have to move to get rid of most of my books and other belongings, we shouldn’t wait till the last minute to get right with Jesus. We may not have the chance.

Discipleship is a matter of discipline, making small sacrifices that keep us focused on Jesus. Besides, there is a certain freedom we gain by not being obsessed with our belongings.

There is a story, I don’t know if it’s true, but it makes the point about being obsessed with possessions and the consequences.

The story is called the monkey trap.

To make a monkey trap, take one large bottle with a small neck, a carboy. Insert a banana into the bottle. Place the bottle on a path that monkeys follow. Stand back and watch. Soon a curious monkey will investigate and when the monkey sees the banana, it will reach in and grab the banana. When he tries to withdraw his hand he is prevented because his closed fist holding the banana will not pass through the small opening. The monkey’s greed will keep him holding onto the banana and therefore he is trapped.

If the monkey were not so greedy, he could simply withdraw his hand, turn the bottle upside down and the banana would slip out. The monkey would be free and still have the banana.

The monkey was trapped by his greed.

I have to ask myself: When does my greed cause me to hold tightly on the figurative banana? Maybe it’s my holding onto my books. I need to ask myself – what is God calling me to do and do I really believe and accept God’s love for me.

In chapter 12 of Luke's gospel, Jesus is teaching his listeners, and us, about our need for God. But also, importantly, about God's love for us, God's caring about our needs and God's looking after our needs and about how to be God's disciples.

Where is our treasure? in possessions or in loving, serving and listening to God, in allowing God to love us.

I will close with a prayer from St. Ignatius of Loyola.

Take, Lord and receive  
my liberty,  
my memory,  
my understanding,  
my entire will,  
everything I have and call my own.  
You gave me all these gifts,  
And to you I return them.  
Dispose of them entirely according to your will.  
Give me only your love and your grace.  
This is all I ask.  
Amen

Rev. Frank Tyrrell