

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster

Sunday, August 7th, Pentecost IX

Isaiah 1:1, 10-20, Psalm 50:1-8, 23-24, Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16, Luke 12:32-40

One of the ways I was taught to look at gospel passages in preparation for a sermon was to ask questions, more specifically identify the questions I have about the passage itself.

There are two questions I have about today's gospel.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. What is the treasure Jesus is talking about in the gospel today?

And:

Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. Who would have thought that the master would actually serve the slaves?

In fact, we read in Luke chapter 17 verses 7 to 10:

“Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, ‘Come here at once and take your place at the table’?⁸ Would you not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me; put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink’?⁹ Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded?¹⁰ So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, ‘We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!’

There is more than one way to look at these questions, but I can't help thinking the two are related. It's a question of relationship rather than separation and independence. The treasures on earth are the ones that separate us from God and loved ones. the big house, the big car, being able to travel anywhere at anytime. Things which distract us from relationships with those we love and from God. They make us think that we don't need others and God. Treasures in heaven are those which connect us to God and those we love. That we find value and meaning in those relationships.

So why would Jesus say in Luke the master will have the slaves sit down to eat and serve them in one part and have the slaves serve the master in another?

Perhaps it's because in the first instance God enjoys a relationship with us. And rewards us for waiting for and being alert for that relationship. The hidden and mysterious sense of God can be found if we are alert. For us to be open to us being found by God. Howard Polsky and Yaella Wozner, tell this story in Everyday Miracles:

Once Upon a time, a carefree young girl who lived at the edge of a forest and who loved to wander in the forest became lost. as it grew dark, and the little girl did not

return home her parents became very worried. They began calling for the little girl and searching in the forest, and it grew darker.

The parents returned home and called neighbors and people from the town to help them search for the little girl.

Meanwhile, the little girl wandered about in the forest and became very worried and anxious as it grew dark, because she could not find her way home. She tried one path and another and became more and more tired. Coming to a clearing in the forest, she lay down by a big rock and fell asleep.

Her frantic parents and neighbors scoured the forest. They called and called the little girl's name but to no avail. Many of the searchers became exhausted and left, but the little girl's father continued searching throughout the night.

Early in the morning, the father came to the clearing where the girl had laid to sleep. Exhausted he suddenly saw his little girl and ran towards her, yelling and making a great noise on the dry branches which awoke the girl.

The little girl saw her father and with a great shout of joy she exclaimed daddy I found you

In the second passage is not so much waiting for God, as plowing, or tending sheep. Maybe this means enjoying what we are doing in and for themselves, but it may be about relationship and caring for others. Those whose jobs it is to care for others by definition have to truly care for, emotionally those under their care. If they have a demeaning view of those under their care, it also demeans their sense of who they are and the value of their life and how they are spending their time.

In other words, that is their reward and don't need another reward from God.

So, for today, the question, where is your treasure? What gives you value? What gets you up and going in the morning? Will it last, is it a treasure which will sustain you for a long time?

Amen

May the path that you walk
be ever guided by justice and light
By the truth that you stand.
May it show, into the land.

May the words of Christ
disturb you all your life.

The road you've chosen is not easy
– yet, here you stand!

(from the song, The Path, by Jason Mann, adapted)