

16th Sunday after Pentecost
September 25, 2022
“Follow the riches” (1 Timothy 6:17-19)
By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today’s text for this 14th Sunday after Pentecost is from 1 Timothy 6:17-19

“17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

Here ends our text.

What is the criteria for describing someone as rich? There are different economic levels and tax brackets that categorize people as working class, lower middle class, middle class, upper middle class and rich. Rich is certainly relative depending on whether you were your living in Jesus’ time or in our present age.

Our Gospel reading speaks of a rich man who had fine clothes and dined sumptuously every day as opposed to a beggar named Lazarus who didn’t have these niceties. He basically had nothing and his health care was the dogs who licked his wounds.

In our present age, kids will be quick to point out that if you live in a mansion then you’re rich. Whether they actually live in a mansion or have an expensive car, kids nowadays can create their own virtual mansions in their virtual worlds and drive whatever car they want to drive. They can play rich as we all did who grew up playing monopoly and building up our hotels on Park avenue.

But back in the real world, our epistle reading from 1 Timothy 6 has godly wisdom concerning riches for anyone in any age.

“6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.”

Great gain has to do with godliness. And it certainly has nothing to do with how much one has in this world. For we brought nothing into it and we can carry nothing out.

That was certainly the case for the rich man in our Gospel reading. He had “his good things” that he trusted in during his short life on earth and now he was spending an eternity in torment because he trusted in the wrong things. He didn’t believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Money was his god. Send Abraham back to my brothers that they may not come to this place of torment. They have the same word of God which you rejected. They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them.

Let us hear them this morning and be convinced of what is certain riches and not follow what are uncertain riches. For most certainly, the rich man and Lazarus and each of us will one day leave this short life and not take anything of this world with us.

But as we heard last week in the parable of the unjust steward, when money fails and you give out (Luke 16:9), the one who trusted in the certain riches of Jesus Christ will be received into the heavenly mansion by those who also trusted in Jesus. They are the ones who became friends with Jesus because the riches of this world were used in good ways to buy Bibles and send missionaries, pastors, and teachers and laymen and women to the lost with the Word of God. They heard Moses and the prophets because time, talents and treasures were used to bring this message of salvation in Jesus to them.

And though Lazarus of our Gospel didn’t have riches in the worldly sense, sometime in his life, he had received the riches of the Word of God, believed it, and held firm to it in the midst of his daily sufferings. And now, he fared sumptuously in heaven while the rich man just wanted someone to touch his lips with water, but there were none to do so.

Follow the riches and one comes to discover riches of a person’s heart. As Matthew 6 tells us:

“19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

That was the problem of the two kingdoms of Israel in the Old Testament, wasn't it? Amos and Isaiah and other prophets were sent to the people whose treasure and gods had become the ease in life. And they had forgotten the true God who had rescued Joseph and the children of Israel out of Egypt. Indeed, God sent the Assyrians in 722 BC to overthrow the Northern Kingdom and the ten tribes of Israel were lost and scattered. God did the same to the Southern Kingdom of Judah in 586 BC, being conquered by the Babylonians although he allowed a repentant remnant to return later to Jerusalem.

Follow the money. Investigators say that to find out if a company has been hiding debt and overreporting revenue as in the case of Enron or Lehman brothers, or a money laundering drug dealer.

Follow the riches and it will lead either to a heart devoid of God or a heart that is content with food and clothing and knows the true riches of God in Jesus Christ, the Savior. You cannot serve two masters.

One master, of mammon, is based on uncertainty – uncertain riches says our text. Here today and gone tomorrow. One's 401K account or pension, (especially these days) or health or crypto currency, or the inflationary dollar is certainly not reliable. Follow these uncertain riches, trust in them with all your heart and you will end up like the rich man or the nation of Israel.

But, our text say to trust **“in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.”**

Our good and gracious God has given us certain riches which moth or rust cannot destroy and last forever. He gives us His precious Son Jesus and the riches of our sins forgiven, the robe of righteousness and the sure hope of eternal life in heaven with Lazarus and all the saints!

“11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay

hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

Paul tells Timothy and each of us to flee the traps of this world, the love of money and greed and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness – true riches. These blessings from God have been given to you when He called you by faith. When was that for Timothy? When he was baptized and made the good confession of his faith in Jesus in the presence of many witnesses.

God has called you into the faith through your baptism and He does so this day in the lives of Jacob and Embryie who will be baptized in a little while. Through baptism God brings a lost sinner into His kingdom of righteousness, washes away his or her sins and makes His temple in the heart of a believer. Yes, God is in our hearts. The greatest treasure of God Himself, is with us. **“He who is in us is stronger than he who is of this world.” (1 John 4:4)**

“God who gives life to all things.... Is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.”

And He makes His abode in your heart through your baptism! So follow Him, Paul says. Follow these riches who gives you life and immortality to your mortal beings, who promises those who are baptized in Titus 3:

“according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

An inheritance in heaven! What riches God mercifully pours out! Lay hold of your baptism daily as you repent of your sins and remember that you are a renewed child of God by the Holy Spirit. You are justified –“ Just as if I’d never sinned”. It is all by grace that you have these riches.

Fight the good fight for them. God blesses you with earthly riches to enjoy in this life for He loves you and wants you to enjoy all things in this life. But most of all He wants you to enjoy the spiritual blessings that are your through faith.

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The good foundation for the time to come -are certain riches. Follow these and use the blessings of this life to share with others that they may know the one True God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the God who created us, redeemed us and keeps us in the one true faith.

“7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” (Ephesians 2:7)

Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)