

Eight Sunday after Pentecost, August 4, 2019,

Hosea 11:1-11; Psalm 107:1-9, 43; Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 12:13-21

In our gospel lesson, a stranger in a crowd cries out to Jesus complaining about how his brother should share the family inheritance with him. In an ancient culture such as Jesus' it was not uncommon for the land not to be divided, especially if it was farm land. But Jesus refused to settle a dispute between the man and his brother and instead told him a parable which would teach him that he was asking the wrong question. The question the man wanted addressed was for his brother to be fair with him.

This weekend we had two other men who had complaints, one went to El Paso, Texas and the other went to Dayton, Ohio. They were dissatisfied with something, but they too were asking the wrong question. Perhaps they too thought that life was unfair to them, but that is the wrong question as our parable reveals.

In the parable Jesus told of a man of means with land enough to have large crops having a bumper crop. His initial response was not gratitude to God or to his workers for the good fortune. His initial concern was how to keep as much of the crop for himself. He was a rich man but small in heart. His response revealed that he lived only for himself. He imagined he would live a long time enjoying his abundance. But God called him a fool because he was not in control of how long he would live. In fact, God would require an accounting of his life that very night. The man who was rich in things was asking the wrong question too. He was asking, how can I keep as much of my wealth as long as possible? The right question was, "What am I to do with the gift of life that God has given me today?"

We tell our children, "Life is not fair." Both shooters, the one in El Paso and the other in Dayton, were unhappy and angry for some reason. They must have felt that they were mistreated in some way. The shooter in El Paso revealed himself to be a white supremacy believer. His complaint may have been that immigrants were displacing him. The shooter in Dayton has yet to reveal his reasoning. Somehow, I believe they asked the wrong questions because they forgot who they were created to be, beloved of God. They forgot that the people they shot were not problems, but also the beloved of God.

Our lesson from Hosea for today reveals the nature of God's love for Israel, and in turn God's love for us all. Last Sunday you heard the lesson about how Hosea compared his relationship with his wife and children to God's relationship with Israel. (Hosea 1:2-10) Although Hosea loved his wife, she was faithless to him, even as God loved Israel who was faithless to God. And in today's lesson from Hosea, we learn how God will not ultimately reject Israel even though she is faithless.

God spoke, "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? (These were towns destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah.) My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath." God will call the beloved back as a lion roars to call back his cubs.

How many of you remember the birth of a baby? As a loving mother recalls the birth of a child and brings the babe to her cheek, God looks on us in a similar way. For any of us who have had the joy of baby children, we know how precious they are, and how much we are willing to do for them. But soon, all too soon, the babies become young children, then teens and then young adults who have to find their own way. But fathers and mothers always remember their children as their babes, no matter how old they become. God will always love us, and hope the best for us.

Now how many of you can remember when the ones who loved you picked you up and delighted in you as a baby? Not many if any of us do. That's because we soon forget that we are deeply loved no matter what happens in life, and if we are not loved by our parents, then at the very least we are deeply loved by God.

But imagine going through life not knowing how deeply loved you are. If we don't know this to be true, then we will strive and struggle to earn it. We will grow and seek to find our way. And so much happens that it is easy to lose our way. We all try to navigate ourselves through the twists and turns, the ups and downs of life. And we never really know what will happen next. And as we try to navigate ourselves through the seemingly endless events beyond our control, we begin to forget how precious we are to God.

During my sabbatical time I read two books by David Brooks, The Second Mountain, The Quest for Meaning, and The Road to Character. In both books Brooks talks about striving to find acceptance through achievement of power, prestige or wealth. He calls this Adam 1 or the First Mountain. It is all about building up the self. But in life, we all have falls, and we realize that climbing the First Mountain isn't the one we need to conquer. Life isn't all about being rich in external things, but life is about being rich in godly qualities such as love of God and neighbor, showing kindness, having patience in suffering, and seeking unity in community. In the Second Mountain we remember or relearn that life is a gift and we experience the grace of love and forgiveness freely received. We cannot be truly whole without loving relationships. And when we love we forget about ourselves, and focus on the beloved.

In the Second Mountain of life we live in gratitude. In our Psalm for today, the Psalmist is thankful for all of God's mercies, in both the challenging times and the good times. God's love is present even when we suffer. We can cry out trusting in God's love for us to help us find our way. And we can do this when we seek the things that are above, as the author of the letter to the Colossians states. Instead of seeking external rewards, the earthly things, we seek to pass on the love we have received, the grace that has been afforded to us. And when we do so we will be transformed into God's servants.

So I invite you to remember how deeply God loves you and all people. Let God's love for you and for all become the foundation of your life. Always remember this, lest we forget and begin to complain that life is not fair to you. Remember and be grateful for the day God has given you this day. And then ask the right questions, "What am I to do with the gift of life God has given me? And how can I use my life to give honor and glory to God and to serve others as a neighbor?"

Amen.

I propose to show that we lose our way when we focus on ourselves and forget the great gift life is when it is lived in God's loving reign, so that when we remember God's goodness and love towards us and all, we will live in gratitude for the opportunity to love others even as God loves us all.

The Collect

Let your continual mercy, O Lord, cleanse and defend your Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without your help, protect and govern it always by your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Old Testament

Hosea 11:1-11

When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.

The more I called them,
the more they went from me;

they kept sacrificing to the Baals,
and offering incense to idols.

Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
I took them up in my arms;
but they did not know that I healed them.

I led them with cords of human kindness,
with bands of love.

I was to them like those
who lift infants to their cheeks.
I bent down to them and fed them.

They shall return to the land of Egypt,
and Assyria shall be their king,
because they have refused to return to me.

The sword rages in their cities,
it consumes their oracle-priests,
and devours because of their schemes.

My people are bent on turning away from me.
To the Most High they call,
but he does not raise them up at all.

How can I give you up, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, O Israel?

How can I make you like Admah?
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?

My heart recoils within me;
my compassion grows warm and tender.

I will not execute my fierce anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim;
for I am God and no mortal,
the Holy One in your midst,
and I will not come in wrath.
They shall go after the LORD,
who roars like a lion;
when he roars,
his children shall come trembling from the west.
They shall come trembling like birds from Egypt,
and like doves from the land of Assyria;
and I will return them to their homes, says the LORD.

The Response

Psalm 107:1-9, 43

Confitemini Domino

- 1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, *
and his mercy endures for ever.
- 2 Let all those whom the LORD has redeemed proclaim *
that he redeemed them from the hand of the foe.
- 3 He gathered them out of the lands; *
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.
- 4 Some wandered in desert wastes; *
they found no way to a city where they might dwell.
- 5 They were hungry and thirsty; *
their spirits languished within them.
- 6 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, *
and he delivered them from their distress.
- 7 He put their feet on a straight path *
to go to a city where they might dwell.
- 8 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his mercy *
and the wonders he does for his children.
- 9 For he satisfies the thirsty *
and fills the hungry with good things.
- 43 Whoever is wise will ponder these things, *
and consider well the mercies of the LORD.

The Epistle

Colossians 3:1-11

If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. But now you must get rid of all such things-- anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

The Gospel

Luke 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

In preparation for this coming Sunday's worship, please pray this coming Sunday's Collect of the Day and read and reflect on the lessons assigned as printed below

The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

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

The Collect

Grant to us, Lord, we pray, the spirit to think and do always those things that are right, that we, who cannot exist without you, may by you be enabled to live according to your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Old Testament

Isaiah 1:1, 10-20

The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Hear the word of the Lord,
you rulers of Sodom!

Listen to the teaching of our God,
you people of Gomorrah!

What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?
says the Lord;

I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams
and the fat of fed beasts;

I do not delight in the blood of bulls,
or of lambs, or of goats.

When you come to appear before me,
who asked this from your hand?
Trample my courts no more;

bringing offerings is futile;
incense is an abomination to me.

New moon and sabbath and calling of convocation--
I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity.

Your new moons and your appointed festivals
my soul hates;

they have become a burden to me,
I am weary of bearing them.

When you stretch out your hands,
I will hide my eyes from you;

even though you make many prayers,
I will not listen;
your hands are full of blood.

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your doings
from before my eyes;

cease to do evil,
learn to do good;

seek justice,
rescue the oppressed,

defend the orphan,
plead for the widow.

Come now, let us argue it out,
says the Lord:

though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be like snow;

though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.
If you are willing and obedient,
you shall eat the good of the land;
but if you refuse and rebel,
you shall be devoured by the sword;
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

The Response

Psalm 50:1-8, 23-24

Deus deorum

- 1 The LORD, the God of gods, has spoken; *
he has called the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.
- 2 Out of Zion, perfect in its beauty, *
God reveals himself in glory.
- 3 Our God will come and will not keep silence; *
before him there is a consuming flame,
and round about him a raging storm.
- 4 He calls the heavens and the earth from above *
to witness the judgment of his people.
- 5 "Gather before me my loyal followers, *
those who have made a covenant with me
and sealed it with sacrifice."
- 6 Let the heavens declare the rightness of his cause; *
for God himself is judge.
- 7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak:
"O Israel, I will bear witness against you; *
for I am God, your God.
- 8 I do not accuse you because of your sacrifices; *
your offerings are always before me.
- 23 Consider this well, you who forget God, *
lest I rend you and there be none to deliver you.
- 24 Whoever offers me the sacrifice of thanksgiving honors me; *
but to those who keep in my way will I show the salvation of God."

The Epistle

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. 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.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old-- and Sarah herself was barren-- because he considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, "as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore."

All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

The Gospel

Luke 12:32-40

Jesus said to his disciples, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

"Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. 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. If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

"But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."