

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church ~ Pinole, CA

The Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost, November 15, 2020

“Fear and Truth”

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Good morning everyone on this cool, definitely fall morning. If you have been reading your emails you will notice we will be having Eucharist on Facebook next week. I will have consecrated hosts for pick up on the Saturday BEFORE so we can break bread together. Next Sunday is Christ the King, which is your namesake and we will have an amazing service.

So there is a lot to be said about today’s Gospel, and I have to say, for myself, it is a clear description of slavery, and fiduciary abuse. However, I am not going to go there today. Instead of looking at the blood and guts of this parable, I want to look at a spiritual aspect.

Again, even in the spiritual reflection on this scripture there are tones of a caste system, or slavery, and also questions about self-worth at the very least. But when you put that aside you are left with the main motivation – the emotion, and it comes down to fear and truth. A juxtaposition between what we believe - fear, and the truth – that God’s got this.

We could all say, “Oh look at those other two men, they did well.” We could look at the slave who hid his talent and call that a failure. We could look at the slave owner for being exactly what the slave said he was, harsh. But I believe the unspoken spiritual issue here for all of them is fear and truth.

How many of you have seen the movie or read the book, “The Secret?” Although fantastically put together, it boils down to a very basic universal truth - that there is enough of everything. Don’t let your negative thoughts keep you from receiving everything you need.

Just like the old adage “it takes money to make money.” But what does that have to do with today’s scripture. Actually, a lot. How you live your life, how you manage yourself

through struggles, how you treat your neighbors, all of these boil down to whether you are coming from a place of gratitude and abundance, or a place of lack and fear.

Do I think that simply praying or wishing will give you abundance? No. Do I think you should invest every last dime you have and ride the market? No. When it comes to your living choices and your financial situation, those are your own decisions. I just ask, that you reflect on your motivations, on your emotions. Can times get tough? Yes, they can. I am not asking for you to try magical thinking. But I am asking you to reflect on whether you are making decisions out of fear, or the truth that God will provide, somehow, even if we can't see how at the moment.

When you are coming from a place of gratitude and curiosity, the world will treat you better. And interestingly enough, even if it doesn't, your attitude of gratitude will help you find the spiritual lesson, and the damage caused by others will feel like less of a burden. This is not denying the truth. Rather, this is living in the spiritual faith that God is on your side – that is the truth.

To take this to the extreme: there is nothing, not a thing, that is really terrible that could happen to you, per the Gospel, the life of Jesus, that you are unprepared for, even to death. You are not alone in your sufferings. You are also not alone at the moment of your death. You do not disappear into the ether, but are rejoined with, and to, a spiritual communion. So why do we live in fear?

This is important right now. The world we knew, and the world that is coming, may be very different. The country has been emotionally torn apart; people are sick and dying; and the political aspect of things is going to be a bumpy ride.

If you approach things out of fear, you will struggle. Just as our slave put forth the truth about fear as his motive to just hang on to what he had. The owner, with fear that he would never have enough, owing slaves, and actually abusing them is also fear-based. We can think that the more successful slaves are lacking fear. But are they?

We cannot know what the two successful slaves were actually thinking, but they seemed rather content in their outcome. Were they fueling a cruel and harsh owner? Yes. But did

that keep them from enjoying their outcome? No. We do not live in a perfect world and sometimes this will be the situation.

Fear produces poverty. Not only financially but also in the way we live our lives. If you are afraid to move (fearing change), afraid to volunteer (fearing becoming involved), or are afraid to speak your truth to power – and I mean that for whatever situation you are in - you are living in fear, and will lack abundance and vibrancy.

I realize some people are living one dollar away from starvation. I realize whole cultures and races have been made to fear their neighbors. I realize we have veterans experiencing hard times, afraid to seek help. At this time, these are the ones with only one talent. We are called not to be the harsh judgmental slave owner, but instead the Christ, sharing and caring.

God willing, more talents will come, because I believe in abundance and that God has my back. And if I share my other talent, and now two of us have less, but we have each other, this is Christ in our midst. This is the Jesus in me shining light to the Jesus in you, and on the situation.

This scripture asks us to look at the gifts we have, even life itself. The contradictions in our lives are never permanent, but continue to flow forward, even to death. God has us in his view, and eventually in his very hands.

Our Epistle calls us “children of the light”. It tells us there is no darkness with faith. There should be no fear, for even at the time of our death God’s got this.

Although we have wrapped up our stewardship season (and thank-you to all who have contributed!), I don’t want you to limit this reflection to only monetary things. I want these spiritual considerations to include your entire life. What if the one talent was your life? Do we bury it or do we live?

Out of fear do we become harsh to others, especially others who are struggling? Do we become jealous of those who have more or do we call them to the truth that they can help? These are the upcoming themes of what our country is grappling with at the very core, although they are wrapped up in political jargon.

I believe our world really is on the verge of becoming more just, but the ride is going to be rough. Whole cultures and peoples have been indoctrinated to think they are less-than, or to be motivated by fear. Even the very elite carry fear in their hearts that they will lose the privileges they have.

How are you motivated? Did you notice the sun today, the air, the fact that you are alive? The smell of the coffee, your breakfast, etc.? Are you living in abundance? Yes, I too have those bills I have to get to. I also have those friends and family I am now separated from, but I am alive. The present hardships too shall pass and good times will come again. And we will have grown through the struggle, if we choose gratitude.

As we head into the holiday season, and the tradition of Thanksgiving, I call upon you to believe, have faith that God is with you through all of this. That the universe has enough for everyone – when we work together, out of compassion – not out of fear. When we trust God enough to live with a pinch of abandon in our lives, we will be abundant. Make no mistake - God is not the harsh slave owner, for he gave His only son, we have nothing to lose. Amen

Moment of Gratitude:

I want to take this moment of gratitude for our veterans. I want to thank you for your service and the continuing gifts you bring to our country. You may feel at this point in your life that it was nothing. However, you filled a spot that needed to be filled, without questions, and therefore, thank you.

This morning on the news, they gave thanks to a WWII veteran who turned 100 years old this year, Roy. Roy was captured and explained that the hardest thing for his captors to understand was his attitude of gratitude and the ability of the American soldiers to laugh and appreciate just life itself, no matter the sacrifice. This was the perfect story for today's spiritual lesson.

Even decades after his military service, Roy continues to teach us. To all veterans, thank you, and we continue to learn from your wisdom.